

CCTV SYSTEMS - ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 2003/04

Joint Report of the Chief Constable and Architect & Technical Adviser

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an annual update on the effectiveness and performance of public area CCTV systems currently used within the Force area, that are managed and maintained by the Police Authority

2 BACKGROUND

In order to ensure the Force can effectively manage and develop both current and future CCTV systems, three separate groups deal with CCTV issues:

- CCTV Strategy Group
- CCTV Working Group
- CCTV Technical Sub Group

All proposals are assessed against the criteria agreed at the Police Authority Meeting on 9 February 1999 (minute 303(ii) - 1998/1999) and the Finance Committee on 10 January 2001 (minute 65 - 2000/2001) as follows:

Category One

CCTV is the best means of resolving a significant policing problem. In such cases, if the provider of the funding cannot meet all of the financial implications, the Chief Constable has delegated powers, subject to consultation with the Clerk and Treasurer, to approve schemes up to a limit of £30,000 and report retrospectively to the next meeting of the Authority.

Category Two

CCTV would enhance the measures open to the police in dealing with an issue of operational importance. Not significant enough to merit a 'Category One' title, in these cases, full revenue costs must be provided from external sources and financial support will not be provided by the Authority.

Any CCTV 'Category 1' schemes approved by the CCTV working group, which require financial contribution by the Police Authority, have to have formal approval/ratification by the CCTV Strategy Group.

3 CURRENT POSITION

The Police Authority supports the following schemes:-

3.1 South West Northumberland Area Command

Three systems exist at Hexham (6 cameras), Haltwhistle (3 cameras) and Prudhoe (8 cameras). All three systems are monitored at Hexham Police Station 24 hours per day by Enquiry Clerks.

In addition to dealing with crime and disorder issues, CCTV is used for traffic management.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) has now been added to the Town Centre systems at Hexham and Prudhoe.

3.2 Newcastle Central Area Command

This Area Command has access to a total of 70 cameras of which 28 are funded by the Police Authority. The Police Authority funded system has 5 full time dedicated CCTV operators and 15 relief operators who proactively monitor the images 24 hours per day at Pilgrim Street Police Station.

The CCTV system continues to be an integral part of City Centre public order policing.

Two cameras have been inactive for over 12 months due to renovation work being carried out in the city centre. It is anticipated that these cameras will become live again in the near future.

The Area Command obtained a £500,000 grant award from the Home Office to convert the existing analogue system to digital. The new digital system was formally launched on 8 December 2003.

The system continues to be expanded by development of partnership 'slave links' at key locations within the city.

3.3 Newcastle East Area Command

Newcastle East Area Command continues to operate 17 cameras, which are monitored at Byker Police Station 16 hours per day between the hours of 7.00 am to 11.00 p.m. by 3 full time operators.

In the area covered by CCTV, 100 monitored incidents led directly to 53 arrests, 160 recorded stopwatch incidents led to 101 arrests and a further 61 arrests were due to involvement of CCTV equipment. In total, 215 arrests can therefore be attributed to CCTV monitoring.

3.4 Newcastle West Area Command

There are currently 24 cameras in this system, which are monitored at Newcastle West Police Station 24 hours a day.

The Area Command secured extra funding to upgrade six cameras from black and white to colour, to add a further 3 cameras to the system and to convert the existing analogue system to digital.

The existing system has also suffered from the failure of a number of microwave units during the year which has resulted in the system not working to its optimum capacity. These microwave links are currently being replaced by 'fibre optic' which will enhance the system further.

3.5 Newcastle North Area Command

The only CCTV system which is part funded by the Police Authority is at Newcastle International Airport.

3.6 Tynemouth Area Command

The Police Authority funds 34 cameras (24 at North Shields and 10 at Whitley Bay) out of a total of 79 CCTV cameras, monitored proactively 24 hours per day in a partnered control room. 12 of the Police Authority funded cameras are experiencing maintenance problems and these will need major repairs or replacement in the near future. The Town Centre systems at North Shields and Whitley Bay can be accessed via a 'slave link' from the Police Stations.

A Police Authority funded CCTV system is also in use at the Port of Tyne.

Camera control room staff generated, or were involved in 645 incidents, which resulted in 363 arrests.

3.7 Wallsend Area Command

The Police Authority contribute to the maintenance of three cameras located on Wallsend High Street, out of a total of 24 cameras, monitored 24 hours per day in a partnered CCTV control room.

Control room staff have reported 143 incidents with 49 incidents leading to arrests.

3.8 Gateshead East Area Command

The Police Authority funds 30 cameras covering Gateshead town centre, Low Fell and Felling town centre. The cameras are monitored 24 hours per day.

The CCTV system is used for general crime and disorder issues and traffic management, and to assist this the CCTV control rooms at Gateshead and Newcastle are to be linked.

3.9 Sunderland City Area Command

Sunderland City Area Command has 35 Police Authority funded cameras monitored 24 hours per day from Gillbridge Avenue Police Station. The system is linked to partners giving access to a further 100 cameras.

In addition a mobile CCTV vehicle funded by the Crime Reduction Fund is used to target events such as football matches.

A total of 454 arrests were initiated as a result of CCTV.

4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Northumbria Police recognises that the use of CCTV could potentially impact on a member of the public's right to respect for private and family life. Where CCTV operates in the public domain, it has undoubtedly contributed to the prevention of crime and disorder. Provided the use of video material is subject to the correct safeguards against improper use, CCTV may be justified.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Treasurer confirms that there are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Use of CCTV has undoubtedly contributed to increasing reassurance within the community and helped in policing activity, which has led to a reduction in crime. As there are now a significant number of CCTV systems, it is becoming increasingly difficult to disaggregate the impact which individual systems have on overall crime reduction.

CCTV continues to be an effective tool in the reduction of crime, disorder, and the fear of crime, as well as assisting the police in responding to incidents and traffic management.

Each Area Commander and linked partner states that CCTV achieves the operational requirements.

8 RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to note the contents of the report.