

The right to safer streets in this country

Stop moaning and report the jobs

David Cracknell, Political editor

JOHN REID, the home secretary, is to launch a campaign against yobbism by telling people to “stop moaning” about antisocial behaviour and do something about it.

Reid is to urge the public to take action against thuggery, vandalism and graffiti by alerting the authorities.

He outlined his plans to stamp his mark on Tony Blair’s flagship “respect agenda” to ministers at a cabinet sub-committee meeting last week.

The home secretary also took a swipe at police community support officers (PCSOs) — civilian officers with lesser powers of arrest — saying their local bosses should realise that they were on the streets not just to provide a “uniformed presence” but to react “robustly” to antisocial behaviour when they see it.

In the session, personally chaired by Blair, Reid told ministers that he backed the respect “czar”, Louise Casey, who reports directly to the prime minister but had clashed with Charles Clarke, Reid’s predecessor.

Reid announced that in future local councils will be urged to sign agreements promising to deliver on the respect agenda, targeting several problems including:

- Teenagers hanging around street corners
- People being drunk or rowdy in public places
- Abandoned cars and dumping of fridges
- Noisy neighbours and loud parties

Reid is also planning an “aggressive” public relations programme under the title “Don’t moan — take action. It’s your street or estate”. The home secretary is not urging the public to take vigilante action, but wants people not to be afraid of tipping off the police and local councils about bad or threatening behaviour.

He is preparing a list of areas where Casey’s respect taskforce will prioritise its efforts, based on levels of poverty, pregnancy and truancy. The minister eventually wants the team to cover one-third of the population, with the worst 40 authorities identified as “respect areas”.

The councils will be required to focus on several “emblematic” policies — including parenting programmes and tough intervention for the worst problem families.

He said that too often there was a “postcode lottery” on the concept of respect: while in some areas the PCSOs were being managed and integrated well into local police forces, in others this was lacking.

The Police Federation, representing rank-and-file officers, has criticised the community support initiative as a cheap substitute for fully trained officers.

Reid also made the point that the career structure and culture of the police encouraged good officers to seek promotion up the ranks away from the streets and into specialist criminal investigation divisions.

The home secretary is said to have noted that there was no sense of a career path based around the "Dixon of Dock Green" style of community policing. He also said that there needed to be more face-to-face accountability from chief constables and magistrates to the public they serve.



MIXED RESPONSE TO PM'S YOB CULTURE PLANS

By Ben Pindar, Community Newswire

POLITICS Yobs, 10 Jan 2006, 1:55pm

As Prime Minister Tony Blair today launched his flagship "Respect" agenda with a pledge to beat yob culture a number of charities have greeted the proposals with a mixed response.

Under the new plans Mr Blair has pledged to target the root causes of anti-social behaviour and unveiled a raft of new powers to combat the problem.

Amongst the measures in the Respect Action Plan will be an increase in fines for fixed penalty notices for disorder from £80 to £100, proposals to make offenders who have been cautioned do unpaid work and plans to take powers to close down properties that become the focus for anti-social behaviour.

Mr Blair also pledged to help "chaotic" families and teenage parents by creating a National Parenting Academy and also said 50 schemes around the country would be developed to deal with problem families.

He said: "We need a radical new approach if we are to restore the liberty of the law-abiding citizen.

"Yes, in theory, that is what is supposed to happen through the traditional court processes. In practice, it doesn't. We are fighting 21st century crime with 19th century methods.

"Respect cannot, in the end, be conjured through legislation. Government can provide resources and powers.

"It can do its best to ensure that wrongdoing is detected, that its powers against offenders are suitable, that its systems are expeditious and its enforcement strong.

"And the British system, like others, in the modern world, has not been good enough against these standards.

"But, ultimately, the change has to come from within the community, from individuals exercising a sense of responsibility."

In outlining his plans to tackle problem families and develop systems to help them become valued members of society he said: "There are a small number of families who are out of control and in crisis.

"It is those families whose children are roaming the streets and disrupting the classrooms. We have to help those parents and their children.

"But the support comes with a tough message. If parents of children who are involved in anti-social behaviour refuse to take up the offer of help, then parenting orders will be made available to a wider range of agencies."

National crime reduction charity, Nacro, responded to the new Respect agenda by saying the money should be invested in existing programmes that were already having an effect in communities.

Chris Stanley, head of youth crime for Nacro, said: "Nacro believes that in order to reinforce respect, the Government should build on what currently works in tackling the underlying causes of problem behaviour.

"Although establishing a national parenting academy may sound impressive in theory, more money needs to be invested into schemes that we know are really making a difference to individuals, families and communities.

"We welcome the introduction of targeted interventions promising a quicker, more co-ordinated package of challenge and support for the parents of children and young people at risk.

"Resources need to be increased for practical schemes to help parents, such as the family support projects run by voluntary organisations like Nacro. These projects act as a positive intervention for families experiencing difficulties and complement work with their children.

"Good local inter-agency working and early intervention greatly reduce the risk of further problems.

"We are glad to see a mention of parenting support being built into youth court pre-sentence reports for all young offenders. This is something Nacro has long campaigned for - positive parental involvement is an essential part of a young person's rehabilitation.

"We are disappointed that the plan does not include any new money for Individual Support Order (ISOs). ISOs are designed to address the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour through a range of preventive measures, such as substance misuse and anger management programmes.

"ASBOs, on the other hand, are purely enforcement based and do nothing to address offending patterns. The government made £500,000 available last June to increase the take up of ISOs, yet the average cost of an ASBO is £2,500 and 6,500 have been issued so far."

Following the speech the director of the Victims of Crime Trust, Norman Brennan, hit out at the proposals and dismissed Mr Blair's words.

Mr Brennan said: "The biggest deception I have witnessed in nearly 27 years of policing is this Government's promise to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

"It is not just criminals who should be put in the dock, but also Tony Blair and his record on law and order that has failed to make the streets of Britain safer."



DANGER: 'Irresponsible idiots'

YOBS are destroying a Peterborough beauty spot by tearing about on high-powered motorbikes, putting people's lives at risk.

The tearaways have been speeding through Cuckoo's Hollow Nature Reserve, off Fulbridge Road, in Werrington.

The reckless youths tear along the designated Green Wheel path at speeds of more than 30mph on the stretch of cycle lane designated for use by cyclists only – even horse riders are not allowed to use the path.



But this hasn't stopped the jobs on their high-powered motorbikes, scooters and mopeds as they speed back and forth.

Some appear to be far too young to even legally ride the bikes, and don't even bother to take the safety precaution of wearing a helmet.

Councillor John Fox, who represents the ward, is calling on police to patrol the area more regularly to try to crack down on the problem, which he says surfaced about six months ago.

Cllr Fox fears it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured, or even killed. "If someone was pushing a pushchair with their child in it, we'd be looking at a very serious accident," he said.

"Young families use this path all the time so they can enjoy this local beauty spot, which really is the jewel in Werrington's crown.

"It's a beautiful area and people love to enjoy Werrington Brook and Cuckoo's Hollow, taking a stroll or a cycle ride.

"But they're in danger now, because of these irresponsible idiots. It's mind boggling. Their stupid actions could lead to injury or death.

"People have been complaining for months now, not just about the mopeds, but also about others riding on mini scooters.

"We need a greater police presence to crack down on this irresponsible and very dangerous behaviour."

Fellow ward councillor Bob Burke echoed the concerns.

He said: "They could not only injure themselves but the public as well.

"It's very, very dangerous. So many people use Cuckoo's Hollow because it is such a well-known beauty spot in Werrington," he added.

"Families with children of all ages use the area, and it is wrong that there are people that are so irresponsible that they put their well-being at risk.

"If police cannot patrol the area, then PCSOs should be present, or the park ranger. All we need is a presence to deter the problem-makers."

Community Beat Manager for Werrington, Pc Philip Oldfield, said, in recent weeks, a 14-year-old from the village had been caught using a motorised scooter in the area. The bike was confiscated by police.

Pc Oldfield said: "We are working to address this problem.

"If we find anyone using mopeds or motorised scooters in this manner then we will issue them a warning under Section 52. This means if we catch them again then we can confiscate the vehicle.

"The offenders don't seem to realise that they face road traffic offences as well for their behaviour, despite being too young to legally hold a license."

01 September 2005



ANGRY RESIDENTS DEMAND MORE POLICING

10 June 2005

Eastbourne News

ANGRY Hailsham residents are demanding more policing in the town in the wake of the savage murder of Gary Rae.

At a council meeting on Tuesday they loudly voiced their concerns to town mayor Geoff Rowe and other town councillors.

They claimed Hailsham was overrun with jobs.

Karen Griffiths, of North Street, said, 'This town like other towns and cities is now being run by youths and jobs.

'There is an overwhelming attitude of defeat within the police force.

'Why has it taken the brutal murder of an innocent member of the community to bring this meeting about?

'Why is there suddenly a visible police presence now?

'This is no more than a PR exercise designed to try and salvage some credibility in a police force that once again has been exposed as apathetic.

'Why can't the police and politicians see the obvious danger in having a police station that we all know closes at the same time as the post office?

'I have needed the police at least three times this year and have reported incidents, names and evidence.

'Nothing was done.

'Recently I had them around to my home after receiving threats and vandalism. Maybe this tragedy could have been avoided.

'We will hear words but we will not see any action. I have lived here all my life and I am now in the process of taking myself and my children away.

'The lunatics have taken over the asylum now.'

Paul Turner, of Market Street, said, 'I have only lived here two years and my property has been vandalised every week since.

'I see fighting going on every week and it must have been caught on the CCTV cameras.

'Our police are so undermanned.

'We need to find out what we can all do together to cure this problem.'

And Ivan Ballard, of North Street, said, 'I understand that the CCTV cameras are all viewed in Eastbourne.

'There is no way that one or two people can view all the cameras.

'It is also rumoured that there is no film in them.

'We all pay for these CCTV cameras and we would like to see results from them.'

Another angry resident dismissed the police community support officers (PCSOs) as being a 'waste of space'.

Cllr Rowe said the PCSOs in Hailsham had been a 'success story'.

He added that the problems in Hailsham were not unique to the town itself but were seen across the UK.

Cllr Rowe said the murder of Gary Rae was nothing to do with Hailsham's problems and described it as an isolated and 'private affair'.

He said there was now an opportunity to work more closely with the police.

At an earlier meeting with police representatives, Cllr Rowe said policing in Hailsham had greatly improved in the last five years.

He said the police had done well in the aftermath of Mr Rae's killing.

But he said there was widespread flouting of 'minor' laws like not using a mobile when driving.

Cllr Rowe said Chief Inspector Rex Matthews and Inspector Bob Brown of Hailsham Police were always very helpful and co-operative.

Insp Brown said it was a 'myth' that there was no film in the CCTV cameras and said they were monitored 24 hours a day.

He said that the majority of youths in Hailsham were law-abiding and caused no problems.

Cllr Nick Ellwood said Hailsham police station was manned 24 hours a day.

He said the town council had done a lot with the police over the last few years by negotiating the provision of PCSOs and setting up 1 Market Square, a drop-in centre for youths.

But he said, 'The problem is that all of our police are governed by performance targets.

'This is basically the be all and end all and they do not have the time to carry out their duty.

'We need to put pressure on the police authority, the Chief Constable and the government to change this and allow our police to police effectively.'

Cllr Ellwood said he remembered who the local bobby was when he was a child.

He had only made three arrests in 25 years because no-one broke the law.

Cllr Ellwood said discipline in society had been gradually eroded and police officers were being hauled before the courts if they gave an unruly person a 'thick ear'.

He added that job culture in the country was 'rife'.

The town council voted to form a sub-committee to liaise closely with Sussex Police.

10 June 2005



March 16 (Bloomberg) -- Harriet Sergeant first complained to the police about rising crime in her north London neighborhood. Then she joined 24 neighbors in hiring a security guard, adding 1,000 pounds (\$1,911) a year to her cost of living in the world's second-most-expensive city.

Sergeant, 50, a historian, says it's worth paying. ``When we called the police they just weren't interested, so we decided we had to do something to make the area feel safer," she says.

Muggings and assaults in London surged 37 percent in the year through March 2004, according to the government-sponsored British Crime Survey. A man was beheaded in north London on March 14 by an axe-wielding assailant who was later arrested. U.K. Prime

Minister Tony Blair is campaigning for re-election on promises to increase anti-crime spending; London's city tax has soared 69 percent since 2001, partly to pay for more police.

"The police cannot target crime, they are too busy trying to solve incidents that have already happened," says Norman Dennis, a lecturer in psychology at Newcastle University and author of "Cultures and Crimes: Policing in Four Nations." "The situation is getting out of control."

Law enforcement strategy has become an election issue for Blair's government, which provides the majority of funding for the U.K.'s police forces. Ken Livingstone, London's mayor, has escaped public criticism for rising crime and says he will keep increasing London city property-based taxes to supplement national funds for the police.

Election Issue

Andrew Cooper, a director at Populus, a polling company, says polls show city residents hold Blair, not Livingstone, responsible for the rise in violent crime. "Londoners feel crime as a big problem, but regard it as a spillover of a national issue," says Cooper. "They do not see it as a problem unique to London demanding a London solution."

Crime was cited as the most important election issue by 45 percent of voters surveyed by Populus for the London-based Times newspaper, ranking it second behind the country's National Health Service. Populus questioned 1,518 adults on Feb. 4-6. The company says the margin of error for the question on crime is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

The number of incidents of violence per 10,000 adults rose to 772 from 565 in London in the year ended March 2004, according to the crime survey. The annual poll questions more than 40,000 randomly selected people about their experiences of crime, including incidents they haven't reported to the police.

'Out of Sight Is Safer'

The police have responded to the rise in drug-related crimes and street muggings with a poster campaign advising Londoners to hide their cash and refrain from using mobile phones in public. The posters, placed on the street and in the London subway, carry the rubric "Out of Sight Is Safer."

Brian Paddick, 46, deputy assistant commissioner of London's Metropolitan Police, said in an interview that the posters were part of a wider effort to raise awareness of crime and help residents avoid becoming victims of street theft.

Blair has already faced criticism in Parliament.

"It is true that recorded violent crime is up, but overall, crime is down since we came to power," Blair said during Prime Minister's Questions on July 21. Crime levels across the U.K. as a whole have fallen by 30 percent as measured by the British Crime Survey since Labour came to power in 1997.

During a one-day tour of five U.K. towns last month, Blair said that increased funding for "safer communities" was one of the six main pledges the Labour Party will offer voters for a possible third term in office. Blair must call the next general election by mid-2006, and members of his party, including Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, indicate the poll

probably will be held in May of this year.

Police Funding

More than three-quarters of London's 2.7 billion-pound police budget for the fiscal year beginning in April is provided by the national government. The budget is up 6.4 percent from the previous period. London taxpayers contribute an additional 196 million pounds through one of the two levies that homeowners pay each year.

Livingstone says the city will increase the number of police officers from 30,500 now to 35,000 by 2008 -- and says Londoners should expect to pay more in taxes over his four-year mayoral term ending in 2008 to fund that move.

Employing the extra 4,500 officers will cost more than 100 million pounds each year in salary alone, according to figures from the Metropolitan Police.

No Response

Ed Budden, a commercial-property manager for U.K. bookmaker Coral Ltd., is a recent crime statistic in the London borough of Hackney. Last November, he was mugged twice in six weeks while standing at the bus stop near his apartment, he says. Violent crime rose 3.4 percent in Hackney in 2004, according to police figures.

The first time his assailants snatched his grocery bag and on the second occasion he was beaten by three men who took his cell phone and wallet. Budden, 28, says the police, whom he called both times, recorded only the second incident. When asked to respond, Paddick of the metropolitan force says the police give priority to crimes that are serious or they have a good chance of solving.

``Hiring a guard is great for those that can afford it, but for most people London is already expensive enough," says Budden. ``The rest of us need to see more police on the streets. That's why we pay council tax, isn't it?"

This year, Londoners will pay 5.5 percent more in their Greater London Authority property-based tax bill, to an average 255 pounds, according to Livingstone's office. The GLA tax was established in 2001 to support the new office of mayor and the city's elected assembly. That levy is in addition to the council tax set by the city's 33 boroughs, which is tied to property values. This year it averages 908 pounds, the highest rate per dwelling in the U.K.

Cost of Living

The cost of living in London ranks behind only Tokyo, according to an annual survey released by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, which tracks property prices and the cost of basic daily goods such as a cup of coffee and a newspaper.

Livingstone says the increase in police numbers is a move to adopt New York's ``zero-tolerance" strategy of the 1990s, in which even small infractions were prosecuted as a wide-ranging effort to secure neighborhoods and to jail habitual criminals.

``We have got to get a debate started about bringing zero-tolerance policing to London," Livingstone says. ``Tackling the small things that make our lives unacceptable is the best

way to break the pattern of crime."

Livingstone was an opponent of Blair's decision to send U.K. troops to the 2003 Iraq war. A former Labour member of parliament, he was elected mayor as an independent in 2000. He returned to the party last year with Blair's support.

Beat Officers

Ian Blair, the new chief of London's Metropolitan Police, blames a decline in visible policing for the increase in street crime.

Taking officers off the beat "was a mistake," Blair said at a Jan. 14 conference on crime reduction. "Now we have re-found the idea of the patrolling policeman and are going to use this to get rid of anti-social behavior and make Londoners feel safer." He is not related to Prime Minister Blair. The police declined to provide details of past shifts from street police to squad work.

Policing policy in London is complicated by controversy over the way crime levels are calculated. The "violent crime" category in the annual government survey of the public includes assaults and muggings but doesn't count murders, rapes, drug arrests or violence against children. Those crimes are recorded by the police as they are reported.

Street Assaults

Newcastle University's Dennis says many crimes, such as sexual assaults and thefts, are never reported, undermining the police figures. "The way crime is recorded in Britain makes it impossible to tell the true severity of the situation," he says.

He also questions whether London will ever have enough police on the street to match New York's crime-fighting capability. New York has one cop for every 202 residents; in London each police officer must guard 236 people.

New York, with a population of 8.1 million, compared with London's 7.2 million, employs 10,000 more police officers than the U.K. capital.

New York has a higher murder rate, though Londoners are more likely to be robbed on the street. In 2003, New York reported 572 murders, compared with 215 for London, according to official police figures from each city. That same year, there were 42,008 robberies in London, compared with 24,105 in New York.

Auxiliary Force

Livingstone has dedicated part of the new funds for 480 additional community-support officers, who patrol the streets yet don't have the power of arrest. While a London police officer can expect to earn 28,388 pounds a year at the start of his career, a support officer receives a maximum of 20,652 pounds. Both wages include a London cost-of-living allowance.

In a London speech on March 9, Prime Minister Blair unveiled a 340-million-pound nationwide neighborhood policing plan and defended the deployment of the auxiliary force,

known by their acronym of CSOs.

“CSOs are, I think, a great support in the same way teachers have teaching assistants,” Blair said, according to the British Broadcasting Corp.

Eli Silverman, a sociology professor at New York-based John Jay College of Criminal Justice, says an auxiliary force of 1,800 can't do the job of fully trained police officers.

“They are additional eyes and ears, which is good, but I don't think they're really going to reduce crime,” says Silverman, who has met with British law-enforcement officials to discuss New York's crime-fighting measures.

`A Deterrent'

Sergeant, author of the 1991 book “Shanghai: Collision Point of Cultures 1918-1939,” says residents of her street in the neighborhood of Little Venice couldn't wait for community support officers. Seven times a week, a guard from security firm 1st Class Protection patrols the street for eight hours, and escorts residents from their cars to their houses after dark.

Steve Sherwood, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police, declined to comment on crime levels in the area patrolled by the protection officer. Official figures show violent crime rose 23 percent in 2004 in the borough of Westminster, which includes Sergeant's neighborhood.

“People mainly employ us as a deterrent,” says Yoad Perets, 32, 1st Class Protection's operational manager. Perets says his firm has been hired to patrol nine more London neighborhoods in the past year, adding to the three it already guarded.

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Last Updated: March 15, 2005 19:07 EST



Police plan to ignore calls on ‘minor’ crimes

POLICE will refuse to respond to “minor” car crashes, fires or disputes between neighbours under plans to cut bureaucracy and put more officers on the beat.

Police chiefs claim that they have been swamped by government legislation that is putting mounting pressure on the service and tying up officers with unnecessary paperwork.

As a result, guidelines drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (Acpos) recommend that officers should no longer respond to low-grade call-outs.

These include minor car crashes in which nobody is injured, rows between neighbours, parking disputes, abandoned vehicles or complaints of loud music or vandalism.

Chief constables are also reviewing whether officers should attend attempted suicides, minor fires, incidents of public drunkenness or be responsible for notifying next of kin of a death.

Senior officers believe the new policy will free up thousands of hours of police time each year, allowing them to put more officers on the beat.

The report *Beating Bureaucracy*, drawn up by the Acpos general policing committee, highlights the massive drain on resources caused by neighbourhood disputes and the “ineffectiveness” of police intervention.

It concludes: “Pressure exerted by legislative change, technological advance and heightened public expectations are severely compromising quality of service standards.

“The frequent misinterpretation of the role of the police as a mighty, all-embracing service is the very essence of the threat facing the service.”

The policy, which is expected to be launched across all eight Scottish forces this year, will see “non-attendance” calls referred to local authorities. Specially trained community support officers and neighbourhood wardens will be expected to deal with the problems.



Phone your local Pc on his mobile

*By Isabel Oakeshott Political Correspondent, Evening Standard
8 November 2004*

The public could be given mobile phone numbers for local police officers under plans to cut petty crime.

The scheme is expected to be included in a White Paper on police reform, designed to provide people worried about low-level crime such as anti-social behaviour, noise and litter with an easy way of contacting an officer.

Under the reforms, officers would be reorganised into neighbourhood teams consisting of a sergeant, two constables and three community support officers. They would be expected to integrate themselves into the community to such an extent that residents know them by name.

The proposals come amid mounting concern over community policing. Pressure on resources has made it difficult for the public to contact officers.

Successful pilot schemes involving the publication of beat officers' mobile numbers have already been carried out. Despite concerns about timewasters, forces found the scheme useful in tackling low-level crime



The right to safer streets in this country

Judge says 24-hour drinking will create 'urban savages'

*By Nick Britten
(Filed: 11/01/2005)*

A judge attacked Government plans to introduce 24-hour drinking yesterday, saying it turned young people into "urban savages" and town centres into "revolting and dangerous places" at night. Judge Charles Harris, QC, said the scheme, which could be introduced this year under new licensing legislation, was helping to create a climate of violence and fear.

His comments were welcomed by senior police officers and add to the growing opposition to the proposal. Last week the Royal College of Physicians warned that Britain was in the grip of a binge-drinking epidemic and said hospitals would be overrun by injured drinkers if unlimited opening hours were introduced.

Judge Harris made his criticism when sentencing three men who went on a drunken rampage in Kettering, Northants, after watching France beat England in the European Championships in June.

The men, who were also high on drugs, beat up bystanders, leaving one, John Williams, in a coma for three weeks, and two others injured. Mr Williams suffered broken ribs, a broken collar bone and a severe brain injury.

Nathan Milne, 25, from Kettering, was jailed for five and a half years for two robberies and causing grievous bodily harm. Nathan Hadfield, 20, from Burton Latimer, Northants, admitted affray, and was sent to a young offenders' institution for 33 months. Jamie Bradshaw, 20, a trainee carpenter from Burton Latimer, admitted affray and was ordered to carry out 50 hours community service.

Binge-drinking and drugs, said the judge, had reduced them "to a state of brutal, mindless aggression."

The right to safer streets in this country

Daily Mail : Tues 21 Sep, 2004 page 12

by the Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire Steve Green

At last, the government is recognising what police officers have known for years. The level of drunkenness and violence which is devastating our town and city centres has become intolerable. It is little short of a scandal.

Last week, the Home Office heralded the success of a national clampdown on alcohol abuse. Responding to widespread public discontent about binge drinking, ministers urged police forces across the country to hit nuisance drinkers with on-the-spot fines and sting the drinks industry for breaking the rules.

young people love to get drunk

The results were impressive : nearly 6,000 arrests; more than 4,000 fixed penalties; more than 9,000 alcohol confiscations; nearly 2,000 sting operations at licensed premises.

I'm sorry but it doesn't bring a smile to my face. I am ashamed.

I am ashamed of the drink-violence-vomit culture which has spread like an ugly rash on the face of our once proud town and cities. I am ashamed that we have been too weak to curb the excesses of generations of young people. I am ashamed because the increasingly desperate entreaties of law-abiding citizens have been systematically stifled by a small but vocal liberal elite who champion the cause of offenders' rights.



getting pissed is so cool

And I am angry - because this now mammoth problem was almost entirely preventable. While I applaud any initiative to arrest this disease, a cosmetic cure is not sufficient. We must treat the cause - we must take a close look at what is poisoning the blood. We must understand the heady cocktail that has caused this problem: an inadequately regulated drinks industry; a lack of personal responsibility; and an absence of fearful consequences for offenders.

What a miserable state of affairs we're in. I have been dealing with the scourge of drunkenness for nearly 30 years. I am all too well acquainted with what goes on in towns across the country. The police service has become the mop-and-bucket of a sick culture. There have been profound changes in our urban areas in the past ten years - devastating changes which are eroding our very civilisation.

get some large ones down the old neck



plenty of booze does wonders for a night out

When I arrived as Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire four years ago, I was shocked by what I saw in the city centre, by the level of drunkenness and the sheer volume of licensed premises - 356 in just one square mile. So how did this come about?

I believe it started about 15 years ago, when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission required the separation of the brewers from the pubs that they owned. This was a disaster. While it might make perfect sense in terms of a free market economy, it is no way to regulate the selling of what is essentially a dangerous,

intoxicating, mind-altering substance.

This policy broke what chain of accountability existed between those who brewed the drinks and those who sold them. The result has been that the industry has pushed the boundaries of acceptability to the absolute limits. Tenants never stay long enough to take responsibility for the mayhem their pubs and clubs create, and the brewers and the national chains are impervious to criticism, blaming instead the individual pubs and retailers. At the same time, the drinking environment was transformed. Out went

tables and chairs and in came 'vertical drinking' - a cynical ploy by the industry to squeeze the maximum number of drinkers into their premises.

Drinking out of bottles instead of glasses was encouraged and the 'happy hour' culture spread across city centres like a sick grin. I do not suggest that the industry has operated outside the law. But what it has done is sacrifice responsibility for bigger profits. It has displayed an easy disregard for the pernicious impact on society at large. It has maximised profits by hooking young people, who have larger-than-ever disposable incomes and are least able to deal with the consequences of overindulgence.

It's hardly a surprise then, that young people flock to the 'vertical drinking' bars, enticed by half-price drinks. Without the traditional older drinker to quell their worst excesses, and without any serious deterrent from the courts, these young people do exactly what they are encouraged to do: they drink to excess.

Then they fight, they scream, they smash windows, they urinate in doorways, they punch police officers and then they lapse into unconsciousness. Bobbies and paramedics, desperately needed elsewhere, are obliged to take care of them and make sure they don't choke. You might think that society has now soaked up enough of this debilitating cocktail - and its hangovers of rubbish, urine, vomit and vandalism. But no: there could be worse to come.

alcohol has an effect on the brain



that is quite obvious from this photo alone

The new Licensing Act offers the possibility of extended drinking hours and even 24-hour drinking - a promised land, so the Government would have you believe, of happy drinkers raising their glasses over hours of relaxed chit-chat, and parting company peacefully at 4am with quiet 'goodnights' and friendly waves to the local bobby.

I know let's go outside with a hose



and piss all over the ground late at night

There is more chance of leprechauns being discovered in your garden than this neverland of round-the-clock drinking bringing peace and harmony to our city streets. If we want a continental café culture, let's build cafes. If, on the other hand, we want 24 hours of hell, let's press ahead with deregulated opening hours.

In truth, we cannot afford to lose more ground. Our communities cannot afford to lose more police officers to city centres on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights because of the ever-present risk of violence. We have to say: Enough.

I am sick of my officers being used as punchbags by drunken thugs. I am sick of my control room staff telling people that we have no one to answer their needs because all the officers are committed to dealing with closing-time trouble.

I am sick of hearing the platitudes of an industry which has enjoyed the ready ear of government while systematically ravaging our town and city centres.

I intend to be as aggressive as possible in challenging the state we are in. We need to take back some ground. I intend to be the biggest pain in the backside imaginable until I perceive that the needs of the vast majority of decent, peaceful people are put first, and the informed views of police officers and other services, who are obliged to clean up the mess, are taken seriously.

We must stop pretending the drinks industry is like any other, and recognise it for what it is - the purveyor of a dangerous drug. It cannot be allowed more liberal regulation. It has already proved itself unworthy.

The time has come for genuine deterrents. The punishment must hurt. We need to show less understanding to yobs who rampage through our towns. We need to show less trust for an industry which has ruthlessly exploited our youth without regard for the consequences.

We need to be intolerant - and proud of it. Perhaps then we'll create an environment in which the next generation can grow up, and the current generations can grow old, as they should - in peace and safety.

looks like a perfectly normal bloke to me



and then ... a few cans later? who can tell

Well what a superb article by Steve Green, Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire. What is your reaction to this splendid article on the dreadful state of our streets today?

[>> Contact the staff of this website here <<](#)

Welcome to Asbo Nation

Britain is divided over the ethics and effectiveness of the latest attempt to curb bad behaviour:

Report by Martin Bright, Anushka Asthana and Lauren Thompson
Sunday June 12, 2005
[The Observer](#)

It's official. We are now living in 'Asbo Nation'.

In a report deeply critical of Britain's human rights record, the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner, Alvaro Gil-Robles, said the 'naming and shaming' of people on antisocial behaviour orders was a breach of their human rights, and that children under 16 should not be put in custody for breaching them.

In a final swipe the commissioner suggested that the whole country was suffering from 'Asbomania'.

Asbos are civil orders made against individuals as a result of persistent antisocial behaviour. They ban those involved from behaving in a specific way, or from entering a specified area. The commissioner's claim is hard to deny in a week when the word 'Asbo' entered the Collins

English Dictionary and a Hull poet researching dog names for a literary festival discovered a Staffordshire bull terrier called Asbo.

More than 4,000 Asbos have now been issued and there is little doubt they are popular with the public. A Mori poll last week showed that 89 per cent of people support them, although only 39 per cent feel they are effective.

The civil rights movement is divided on the issue. Yesterday Andrew Puddephatt, former general secretary of the campaign group Liberty, branded opponents childish, and called on people to stand up for the human rights of the victims of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The week began with the news that 11-year-old Siobhan Blake had been served with an Asbo for terrorising the residents of the seaside town of Hastings by pelting them with eggs.

On Wednesday, Home Secretary Charles Clarke introduced legislation to deal with alcohol-related antisocial behaviour, including 'booze Asbos' banning problem drinkers from city centres.

The campaign group Asbo Concern, set up to expose abuses, joined the debate, asking how the system can be just when only 3 per cent of Asbo applications are refused.

By the end of the week, the government's 'Asbo Tsar', Louise Casey, attacked critics of the legislation, saying they were 'not living in the real world'.

Eddy Newman, a councillor from Manchester, Britain's Asbo capital where more than 440 of the orders have been issued, said: 'We see them as enforcing standards of behaviour, and as a super-warning, not a punishment.'

But Shami Chakrabarti, current director of Liberty, told The Observer: 'Justice and engagement are replaced by tough talk and arbitrary powers which make insufficient distinction between the criminality, irritation and social exclusion.'

The naming and shaming of children is more akin to the medieval stocks than a 21st-century law and order strategy. We are in danger of transforming Britain into Asboland.'



Convicts will soon outnumber the amount of places in which to cage them.

By GEORGE PASCOE-WATSON
Deputy Political Editor Tuesday, January 18, 2005

JUDGES are being ordered to free villains if there are not enough cells to jail them.

For the first time the judiciary must take prison space into consideration when sentencing criminals.

The extraordinary guidelines come in the Management of Offenders and Sentencing Bill published yesterday.

Last night Shadow Home Secretary David Davis warned: "Those who deserve to be in prison should be in prison."

"Sentencing should be determined by the crime, not by the number of places available. The British public will suffer as a result of this government's irresponsible policies."

Angry critics pointed out that official figures show that convicts will soon outnumber the amount of places in which to cage them.

By the end of the year, 81,500 prisoners are expected — but there will be just 78,200 jail places, says the Prison Reform Trust. And by 2006 the number of lags will shoot up to 87,200, with only 78,750 cells available.

Details of the shake-up come just a day after Home Secretary Charles Clarke refused to beef up protection for homeowners from burglars.

Home Office chiefs insisted judges will be able to jail criminals.

ON THE BEAT



Teens' park chaos angers residents

HORBURY residents are sick and tired of hearing about Carr Lodge Park after **five years** of anti-social-behaviour by the town's youths.

At a neighbourhood police team meeting, frustrated and infuriated members of Horbury's community vented their anger about the antics of teenagers in the park and claimed the skatepark area was becoming a no-go zone.

High on the list of the residents' concerns was that much of the anti-social-behaviour carried out in the park was alcohol fuelled and many of the youngsters, in groups of up to 40, were under the legal age to drink booze.

Horbury Community Council member, Christine Lockwood, said: "The problems in the park

have been going on for five years, it does not seem to be getting better – it is getting worse." At the meeting parents said they no longer take their children into the playground which is next to the skatepark in Carr Lodge Park because they feel intimidated by gangs. The play equipment is damaged and there is always a lot of rubbish – mainly empty alcohol cans.

Part of the new approach to the policing is to take offenders home and make parents aware of how their child is behaving.

Sgt Darren Norgate, of the neighbourhood policing team, said: "Some children can be sorted out on the first or second contact and will not be a problem again.

"But the people we arrest time and time again are hell bent on chaos and they are being targeted."

Residents claimed the under-age drink problem is still not being tackled.

Sgt Norgate said: "Alcohol is a common factor. And licensing can deal with off-licences who sell to underage children.

"But people are getting clever and paying for older people to buy the booze for them and getting it delivered in cars."

Sgt Norgate told the meeting his team of officers, including community support officers and Wakefield Council's neighbourhood patrollers, were developing a pro-active method of policing to combat problems of large groups of youths not just in Horbury but across the city.

He said: "The rest of the police react to calls on a daily basis. What the neighbourhood police team is trying to do is pick up the other pieces.

"They are tackling the things that before we never got round to.

"If we get calls about large groups of youths drinking on a Saturday night, unless it is a dangerous situation, we are not going to get there.

"But we can plan the areas we are going to tackle and deal with it."

Incidents of anti-social behaviour tailed off after a blitz by the neighbourhood police team last month but residents fear the problem is rising again.

A full report will be given by Sgt Norgate at the next meeting, details will soon be announced.

03 June 2005 [see the full report here](#)

Three strikes will mean automatic jail, says Howard

By George Jones, Political Editor
(Filed: 08/02/2005)

All criminals convicted for a third time of burglary would serve a minimum of three years in prison under Conservative plans to restore public confidence in the sentencing system.

Michael Howard announced yesterday that he wanted to revive the "three strikes and you are out" policy that he sought to introduce when he was Home Secretary in the last Conservative government.

In 1997, he introduced legislation that laid down a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years for those convicted for a third time of a drug trafficking offence involving a class A drug

and a mandatory minimum sentence of three years for those convicted for the third time of burglary.

However, Labour secured an amendment to the Act that stated that mandatory sentences should not be imposed if the judge considered it "unjust".

As a result, just three drug dealers and eight burglars have received mandatory sentences, according to latest figures available.

Mr Howard said a Conservative government would repeal Labour's amendment and ensure that mandatory sentences were imposed in all cases, except where there were exceptional circumstances.

He said the certainty of automatic minimum sentences would act as a powerful deterrent. Mr Howard, in a speech in Darlington, said a Conservative government would introduce "honesty" in sentencing.

He said it was currently a "charade" because everyone knew that prisoners rarely, if ever, served the sentences that were handed out by the judges.

The Tories would ensure that judges sentenced offenders to a minimum and a maximum number of years in prison. The minimum sentence would be served in full. Prisoners who behaved well and were no longer a danger to the public would be released at the end of their minimum sentence. Those who misbehaved or remained a danger to the public would serve the maximum sentence.

Mr Howard said a Conservative government would scrap Labour's early release scheme for prisoners. Since it was introduced in 1999, 3,500 crimes had been committed by people on early release - 500 of them violent crimes. He acknowledged that the tougher sentencing policy would require more prison places. The Tories were committed to funding an extra 20,000 prison places by 2010.

Mr Howard said some commentators believed that rising crime was an inevitable part of a modern society. But rising crime was not like the British weather – "something we moan about but cannot change".

Before his speech, Mr Howard joined Cleveland police on an early morning raid on suspected drug dealers in Grangetown on the outskirts of Middlesbrough. A force spokesman said three people were arrested during two raids in the area and a quantity of what was believed to be cannabis was seized.

After attending a 7.30am briefing, the Conservative leader donned a stab-proof jacket and travelled in a convoy of police vans. About 30 officers joined in the simultaneous raids at two nearby addresses. Mr Howard followed them into one property, after officers had smashed down the front door.

Mr Howard denied that the high-profile raid, and his involvement, were merely a publicity stunt. "It has been a very good example of pro-active policing of the kind I want to encourage" he said.

Juliet Lyon, the director of the Prison Reform Trust, criticised Mr Howard for believing "that prison works" when three out of five people walked out of jail and returned to crime.

KICKBOX KILLER

Mar 5 2005

Fury at 30 months jail for OAP's death

By Richard Smith

A JUDGE sparked fury yesterday by jailing a kickboxing thug who killed an OAP for just two and a half years.

Grandfather William Bird, 67, was felled by a single punch from martial arts fanatic Craig Swann, 21.

Mr Bird's skull shattered on a concrete pavement and he died five days later.

Swann, who had been asked by the pensioner to stop cycling on a railway footbridge, rode off to boast in a pub he had "beaten the crap" out of an "old duffer".

Patrick Mason QC, prosecuting, said: "Using his considerable power as a kickboxing enthusiast he lashed out at Mr Bird." And judge Thomas Crowther said at Bristol crown court: "There must be a sentence of imprisonment to appease the loss that Mr Bird's family have suffered."

But it sparked fury in Mr Bird's home town of Bridgwater, Somerset, where he was killed. Deputy mayor Bill Monteith said: "It's hardly a sentence at all."

The Victims of Crime Trust called it "almost as despicable as the crime" and MP Ian Liddell-Grainger said it was "utterly wrong".

Swann, who had previous convictions for battery, admitted manslaughter - for which the maximum sentence is life.



do you know what PCSOs can do?

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Bouncers and community police 'not calming disorder'

Andrew Robinson

A REPORT into the causes of night-time noise and disorder outside bars in a busy Leeds suburb has concluded that bouncers and community police patrols do little to calm things – and may actually make things worse.

An undercover investigation in Headingley by an expert in bar and nightclub management has raised serious doubts about the work of police community support officers. Consultant

Dick Child claimed the officers did not seem to see or hear people shouting, singing, drinking and urinating in the street.

Although the PCSOs' job is to stop anti-social behaviour, Mr Child witnessed two officers apparently joining in the fun with a group of noisy girls at 11.30pm near The Arc bar.

In a report to Leeds Council, Mr Child said: "As the community police and their female entourage passed noisily by, a raucous rendition of the Chorus of the Nubian Slaves sounded at the cinema end of Bennett Road, as a group of 12 men made their way towards Otley Road. The community police did not see or hear them."

In another late-night incident, two PCSOs apparently failed to notice two men urinating in Bennett Road and others drinking bottles of beer in the street.

Mr Child wrote the report for the owners of The Arc, The Box and Trio bars, which he concluded were extremely well run – apart from their door staff, many of whom he said were surly and unprofessional.

Some bouncers ignored customers and failed to ask them to stop larking around and shouting.

On the subject of bouncers, he wrote: "Overall there was no real warmth of welcome. No-one seemed to be controlling them, but what was even worse was the apparent disregard to all that has been taught them during their 30 hours of training, and instead of being an asset to management, they came over as the opposite. Their general demeanour sent out negative marketing vibes, which is in complete contrast to the enthusiasm of management and supporting staff."

The report, *Headingley Nightlife*, has made recommendations to Leeds Council, bar owners and police including:

- > Setting up a meeting to discuss serious shortfalls in the quality of door supervisors
- > The possibility of bars employing police officers to patrol Headingley's streets
- > Provision of public toilets to prevent urinating in the street
- > Possible use – if legal – of security staff to prevent anti-social behaviour in the street.

Mr Child concluded each of the three venues he monitored appeared to be completely free of anti-social behaviour and drink policies were responsible.

Leeds licensing and regulatory committee chairman Coun Ronald Feldman said the serious concerns about bouncers and PCSOs would be taken up.

No-one was available to comment for the bars' owners.

West Yorkshire Police defended the role and use of PCSOs. Det Insp Simon Walker said PCSOs played a vital role in reducing fear of crime and making police more accessible.

By speaking to residents, they had helped detect numerous crimes, he said. "PCSOs have also been involved in a violent crime reduction project in Headingley. Under the initiative, high-visibility patrols are mounted in areas which had traditionally suffered anti-social behaviour and drink-related disorder, providing an immediate deterrent..."

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12 May 2005