



CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES IN THE HARROGATE DISTRICT

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MEDIA RELEASE

Photo opportunity – see below

POLICE GET PEDAL POWER

HARROGATE District Safer Communities Partnership is helping North Yorkshire Police 'reinvent the wheel'. A successful bid for funding from the Partnership has secured eight hi-tech mountain bikes for use by the Community Beat Teams in areas including Bilton, Boroughbridge, Jennyfields, Knaresborough, Oatlands, Starbeck and Ripon City centre.

Once a very popular way of helping police cover their beats, bikes have seen a comeback in recent years.

The BBC website – one of the most visited sites in the world – carried out a poll recently to vote on ten 'social innovation' ideas supplied by readers. The idea with the second highest number of votes was for 'more police to patrol on bicycles'.

The Community Beat Teams have welcomed the introduction of bikes and each officer feels they increase their visibility in their relevant area and allow greater coverage than solely being on foot.

Sergeant Mark Gee, who manages Harrogate District Community Policing Team, said: "Bicycles are, of course, nothing new to policing and seeing a bobbie on the old sit up and beg push bikes was a common sight in the past. But modern policing calls for modern machinery, which is why we have gone for up to the minute lightweight mountain bikes.

"Residents tell us that they want to see more bobbies on the beat as it makes them feel safer. They have also told us that they like the idea of bobbies on bikes, as they are able to react faster and allow them to go into areas inaccessible to cars. And generally, they feel that bobbies on bikes are very approachable."

The Harrogate District Safer Communities Partnership funded the purchase of the bikes with a grant of £3,500. The eight hi-tech Giant Explorer bikes have been purchased from Moonglu cycle shop in Ripon.

The bikes are already proving to be extremely useful. Police in Bilton and Starbeck areas are finding them particularly useful for accessing the old railway line and they have also led directly to the arrest of a person wanted for burglary in the Bilton area. He was recognised by the Community Beat Officer who gave chase on his bike into the grounds of a local school where the suspect was detained until a police vehicle arrived to take him to the police station for questioning. ENDS

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Sergeant Mark Gee and five of the Community Beat Bicycle Team will be at St Andrew's Church, High Street, Starbeck at 3.30 pm on Wednesday, 25 August 2004.

The entire 'mounted' Community Beat Team will also be taking part in Harrogate's first-ever high profile 'Say No to Crime Day' to be held on Thursday 26 August.

MEDIA CONTACT: Sergeant Mark Gee is available on 01423 539482. Further details are available from Lynne Mee, Harrogate Borough Council's Communications and Media Officer on 01423 556022.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Reducing and preventing crime, and the fear of crime, is the aim of the Harrogate and District Community Safety Partnership.

Made up of representatives from the Police, North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council and other agencies and voluntary groups from across the district, the Partnership aims to tackle crime and disorder problems through a range of local actions and initiatives.

The Partnership was born out of the Crime & Disorder Act (1998) which asks local authorities to carry out a crime audit every three years. This audit highlights people's concerns, the Partnership then draws up a strategy to help maintain, and improve, the quality of life within the community, and ensure householders feel safe and not threatened by crime and disorder, or by other anti-social behaviour.