

East Midlands - BIG Attack on Graffiti, Lincoln Business Improvement Group re: Criminal damage

Scanning:

Lincoln's Crime Audit (2004) showed that criminal damage accounted for 25% of all crime in Lincoln. Hot Spots were identified in the city centre, and the accompanying perception survey showed residents were "*especially anxious about crimes such as [...] graffiti and vandalism*". A survey of local businesses in 2005 indicated concern about the way in which environmental crimes such as graffiti could impact upon the appearance of the built environment. An Environmental Visual Audit identified that graffiti was the most prevalent factor.

Analysis:

Spatial and temporal analysis of police data did not contribute anything useful in terms of understanding the problem. A more in-depth Graffiti Audit was conducted in Lincoln city centre, where 47 instances of graffiti were recorded in a four week period. Data collected were then mapped to identify three graffiti hotspots, and by weighting instances of graffiti according to their size and impact, a simple means of establishing a baseline was developed. Graffiti to commercial premises (43%) and graffiti to street furniture (46%) accounted for almost 90% of the graffiti discovered. 94% of graffiti, at that time, was attributable to one person.

Response:

Police and Warden patrols to graffiti hotspots were conducted both to catch and deter offenders. One offender was brought to justice as a result. Covert CCTV was installed in one hotspot and captured the images of two graffiti offenders. The offenders have however, never been identified. Further research identified the potential to disrupt offending cycles by rapidly removing graffiti once applied. LincolnBIG made the strategic decision to direct human and financial resources to implement this methodology and set the objective of reducing graffiti in Lincoln city centre by 50% by the end of 2007

Assessment:

There was 57% less graffiti in Lincoln city centre in December 2007 than there was twelve months earlier. Three offenders were brought to justice, and details/images of 47 known graffiti 'tags' have been recorded on an AIMS database. Graffiti was removed from 203 sites during the twelve month period at an estimated cost of £15,500. The economic benefits of the removal of this graffiti are estimated at over £93,000. The scheme which is business-lead, business-managed, and business-funded demonstrates that the private sector can work strategically to create sustainable solutions to persistent problems within our communities.

The scheme is sustainable and transferable to other towns or cities where a Business Improvement District initiative is in place, or contemplated.