



Association of
Police and Crime
Commissioners



**PCCs MAKING A DIFFERENCE
IN FOCUS: TACKLING BUSINESS
AND RETAIL CRIME**



IN FOCUS: TACKLING BUSINESS AND RETAIL CRIME

Foreword from **APCC Lead for Retail and Business Crime and PCC for Sussex, Katy Bourne OBE:**



The current level of retail crime on our high streets is unprecedented. Every day, shopworkers are facing the consequences of shoplifters' brazen and abusive behaviour.

The British Retail Consortium's recent crime survey showed a 50% increase in the levels of retail violence and abuse - to 1,300 incidents a day - with the cost of theft to retailers rising to £1.8 billion (from £953 million the previous year). It is now, more than ever, that policing needs to work effectively with businesses to tackle this deluge of shop thefts, assaults and criminality.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are uniquely placed to drive the efforts to tackle business and retail crime successfully in their areas. We can convene both the public and private sectors to identify and respond to the specific challenges impacting the reporting, prevention and investigation of these crimes. My **Safer Sussex Business Partnership**, which you can read more about below, has already led to direct action to improve data-sharing and ease of reporting.

PCCs also commission services for victims of crime, which are free of charge to access regardless of whether the victim reports to the police or not. Naturally, PCCs are keen to encourage all victims of retail crime to obtain help if required.

Nationally, all police forces have now signed up to the **Retail Crime Action Plan**, which clearly sets out how officers should respond to shoplifting. PCCs up and down the country can now utilise the Action Plan to hold our forces to account for how they respond and investigate retail crime.

We also cannot shy away from the increasing and significant threat to retailers from **organised criminal gangs (OCGs)**. These criminals operate across many retailers and multiple police force borders, which is why, last year, I established a unique national business/police partnership called **Pegasus** to scope the true scale of organised retail crime.



Working with 15 of the country's biggest national retailers - co-ordinated by security provider Mitie - and with support from the Home Office, Pegasus has committed nearly £1 million to build a new capability of analysts and intel officers within OPAL - the existing specialist national crime unit for serious acquisitive crime.

Pegasus is a ground-breaking collaboration by the retail sector in a highly competitive market and complemented by funding from National Business Crime Solutions. The Pegasus partnership will provide OPAL with information about incidents and suspects including CCTV, vehicle details and, where it operates, biometrics. The newly established unit of analysts and intelligence officers within OPAL will collate the data and produce a national picture of the OCGs and persistent offenders which will be passed back to police forces to act upon.

However, there is still more work to do to prevent the crimes that impact businesses and retail workers the most. This is why I am supporting calls for there to be a specific offence for assaulting a shop worker. No one should have to go to work fearing for their safety and I've seen, first-hand, the fear, harm and damage that the abusive and violent behaviour has on shop staff.

I'd also like to see prolific shoplifters monitored with electronic tags, as currently happens with persistent domestic abuse perpetrators and burglars. I've already raised this with the Policing Minister and others at the National Retail Crime Steering Group.

I am delighted that more PCCs than ever before now have business and retail crime as a priority within their Police and Crime Plan and I am pleased to be able to share with you some of the important work being undertaken across England and Wales by my colleagues.





CONTENTS

- 01** Formation of Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP) (page 5)
- 02** Hampshire and Isle of Wight PCC's 'Navigator' Initiative (page 8)
- 03** Thames Valley's 'Hostile Environment' to retail crime (page 11)
- 04** Cleveland's retail crime initiatives (page 14)
- 05** West Yorkshire: Forensic 'SmartTag' technology (page 17)
- 06** Northamptonshire's 'Operation Elegance' (page 19)
- 07** Merseyside: Using criminal assets to protect businesses (page 21)
- 08** MOPAC: Use of retrospective facial recognition software and the London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership (page 23)
- 09** Using retailer data to target prolific offenders across Warwickshire (page 26)
- 10** Derbyshire: Business Crime Reduction Co-ordinator (page 28)
- 11** Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Responding to retail crime (page 30)
- 12** Durham's 'Safer Business Group' (page 32)
- 13** West Mercia: 'Calling time on retail crime' (page 34)
- 14** Dorset: Tackling business crime (page 36)
- 15** Wiltshire and Swindon's Action on retail crime (page 38)
- 16** Lancashire's Neighbourhoods Fund (page 40)
- 17** Bedfordshire: Cracking down on retail crime (page 42)
- 18** Cheshire: Keeping businesses safe on and offline (page 44)
- 19** North Wales Cyber Security Event (page 46)





1

SUSSEX: Formation of Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP)

In February 2020, **Sussex PCC Katy Bourne** established the Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP). This brought together police and retailers and sector representatives to:



KATY BOURNE OBE
PCC for Sussex

- Examine and enable easier reporting to police;
- improve intelligence and evidence sharing to support focus on prolific offenders;
- improve the overall police response to incidents reported by businesses;
- and identify an increased range of disposal outcomes and opportunities for diversion.



BUSINESS CRIME TEAM

The PCC provided resources for a dedicated Business Crime Team (BCT) of nine trained investigators within the Force Control Room. This new team built relationships with retailers and deployed new technology and streamlined processes to understand the typical journey of a business crime report. DEMS, the Digital Evidence Management System quickly uploads CCTV footage for police to access and share across forces.



1

SUSSEX: Formation of Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP)

Force intelligence meetings help build evidence files for linked incidents and prolific offenders and these jobs are resolved out at a District level. This brings the evidence collation into the centre and means local policing teams can focus on the final enforcement element of arrest and charge.

The BCT review around a third of reported incidents in Sussex a year with a solved rate of nearly 70% against a rate of 22.7% for incidents they don't review.

ONE TOUCH REPORTING

One Touch Reporting is a unique time-saving innovation led by Sussex Police in a pilot with the Co-op and National Business Crime Solutions (NBCS). This takes incident reports straight from the Co-op's My Safety system using a bespoke API (Application Programme Interface) directly into the force's Niche Crime Recording application.

This reduces the time to report down from 30 minutes to around 90 seconds per crime. These are passed to the BCT for investigation leading to an increase in prolific offenders being identified and arrested. Last year, 24 pilot Co-op stores contributed to 19% of all retail crime reported to Sussex Police indicating the volume of crime going unreported by other stores. Work is ongoing to scale up this approach by Sussex Police and there is national interest in adopting it.





SUSSEX: Formation of Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP)

DISC SYSTEM

Disc is an established online reporting platform that empowers communities to share information about incidents and offenders, as well as best practice in security.

DISC has been rolled out in rural areas and some towns in Sussex via Business Improvement Districts where it has been well received and well used by businesses in particular. A pilot is underway for DISC to identify unknown offenders by image-sharing through the Business Crime Team to DISC users. A second phase will enable the education sector to identify youths coming to notice for crime and ASB who could be helped with early intervention, diversion and safeguarding.



PEGASUS

Sussex PCC Katy Bourne OBE said:

“ Last year, I was approached by a group of retailers who told me that organised gangs were operating with impunity across stores and police force areas. I put a proposal to the Policing Minister to establish a national business/police partnership called Pegasus to scope organised retail crime and create intelligence packages for forces to act on.

Working with 15 of the country’s biggest national retailers - co-ordinated by security provider Mitie - and with support from the Home Office, Pegasus has committed nearly £1 million to build a new capability of analysts and intel officers within OPAL - the existing specialist national crime unit for serious acquisitive crime

It will radically improve the way retailers are able to share intelligence with policing, to better understand the tactic used by organised retail crime gangs and identify more offenders.

I’ve described Pegasus as a step change in the fight back against organised retail crime and we really look forward to seeing some of these gangs being taken down in the coming months. ”





2

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT: PCC's 'Navigator' Initiative

Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones has advocated a new partnership approach in Portsmouth which aims to drive down retail crime through positive intervention.



DONNA JONES
PCC for Hampshire and Isle of Wight

The initiative is a collaboration between the OPCC, Portsmouth City Council, Southern Co-op, Society of St James and the police to work with the most prolific shoplifters and business crime offenders through the help of a '**Navigator**.'

The Navigator works with police, probation, council and the prison service to identify individuals who frequently come to the attention of local businesses for certain offences such as assault, shoplifting, ASB, begging and criminal damage.

The charity **Society of St James**, which helps vulnerable people experiencing homelessness, problems with alcohol and substance abuse and other complex needs, has been commissioned to appoint the Navigator role.



2 HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT: PCC's 'Navigator' initiative

Mike Taylor, Operations Director for the Society of St James said:

“ Our new Navigator will be a bridge to the excellent support services available in the city, including help with addiction, housing, poverty or diversion from crime through our therapeutic sports programme or paid work in our social enterprise – **Café in the Park**. ”

The Navigator's objective is to support offenders receptive to treatment and support to break free from a cycle of offending by providing support and access to intensive and targeted intervention to curb their offending behaviour and with the aim to live crime-free lives.

Cllr Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Preventing Homelessness said:

“ People who find themselves rough sleeping or on the brink of homelessness will often resort through desperation to shoplifting. We know people are worried about it and it is great that we will tackle it. ”

Southern Co-op originally pitched the idea to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and agreed to fund £35,000 for the project over two years. Portsmouth City Council has provided an additional £32,000 through its Rough Sleeping Initiative grant from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to enable full-time coverage.

Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones said:

“ Retail workers are often on the front line of abuse, they are in public-facing roles and require more support when it comes to assaults or verbal attacks.

“ I know locally that businesses have adopted various crime prevention initiatives to ensure they can protect their buildings, products and each other from burglary, theft and assault, but we need to do more.

“ To bring about long-lasting solutions we have to look at ways to break the cycle of offending. We need to focus on the front end of the criminal justice system and look at why these crimes are committed, and ultimately try to change that. ”

The pilot is funded until August 2024.

the society of
st James >
believing in your future

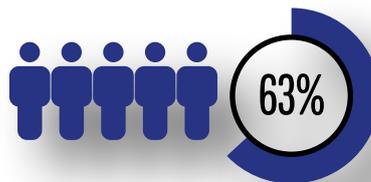


2 HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT: PCC's 'Navigator' Initiative

EVALUATION

Since the start of the pilot, the Navigator has worked with 15 people. Out of the 15 people, several have very complex needs not limited to but aggravated by substance misuse. This means engagement has been hard but four of those individuals have fully engaged with the Navigator. They have sought help and support for their mental health, completed a detox, got themselves into accommodation and one has stopped shoplifting completely.

POLICE RECORDS SHOW SHOPLIFTING IS REDUCING, EVEN WHEN A PERSON IS NOT ACTIVELY ENGAGING:



3

THAMES VALLEY: Thames Valley’s ‘Hostile Environment’ to retail crime

Matthew Barber, Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, is determined to create a hostile environment for those who commit crimes in the local economy.



MATTHEW BARBER
PCC for Thames Valley

RETAIL CRIME STRATEGY

In January 2024, the PCC launched his Retail Crime Strategy. Developed jointly with retailers, business groups and Thames Valley Police, the strategy sets out several actions to tackle retail crime and violence towards shop workers focusing on 6 key pillars – Intelligence, Enforcement, Partnership, Prevention, Justice and Reassurance.

PCC Matthew Barber said:

“ Retail Crime is often seen as a victimless crime, but it has a profound impact on retail staff, customers and the wider economy.

“ At its core the strategy aims to improve collaboration between the police and retailers, deliver a more visible, targeted and robust response to retail crime, increase the security and confidence of local businesses and help make retail spaces across the Thames Valley safer. ”

THAMES VALLEY STRATEGIC RETAIL CRIME FORUM

The **Thames Valley Strategic Retail Crime Forum** will facilitate continued collaboration and engagement with retailers and local business groups.

Chaired by the PCC, it will allow regional oversight of issues and provide a forum for business groups and senior figures in retail locally, regionally, and nationally to liaise with the police, escalate issues and share best practice.



THAMES VALLEY: Thames Valley’s ‘Hostile Environment’ to retail crime

OPERATION PURCHASE

Operation Purchase is Thames Valley Police’s operational response to retail crime. Op Purchase will increase the visibility of officers and PCSOs in retail spaces in addition to monthly activity in retail spaces in each Local Policing Area.

This operational response will be bolstered by the creation of a **new Business Crime Team** that will improve investigations and work to identify prolific offenders, including **Organised Crime Groups** operating within the Thames Valley.

Work is also being done within Contact Management to improve the police response to reports of retail crime, particularly incidents involving violence towards staff or where an offender has been detained.

This greater policing focus on retail crime should help to restore the trust and confidence of the sector and reduce offending.





3

THAMES VALLEY: Thames Valley’s ‘Hostile Environment’ to retail crime

DISC

In Thames Valley, approximately 14,000 shoplifting offences are currently recorded each year. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that these offences are significantly underreported meaning that the police often do not have a full picture of the offences taking place or the necessary intelligence to pursue offenders.

To improve reporting, the PCC has procured **DISC**, a secure online information-sharing system that allows retailers to report and access information about crime such as shoplifting and ASB.

The platform will be made available to all retailers, Business Improvement Districts and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships across the Thames Valley.

James Lowman, Chief Executive of the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), said: “ We’re delighted to see this prioritising of retail crime, making it clear that shop theft and violence against shop workers will not be tolerated. ”

Nicki Juniper, Head of Security and Shrinkage at John Lewis Partnership, said:

“ We’re really pleased to see this important progress in the Thames Valley. We look forward to working with Thames Valley Police, and others in the sector, to keep our Partners and customers safe. ”



Download a pdf of the Thames Valley Retail Crime Strategy





CLEVELAND: Cleveland's retail crime initiatives

During 2023, **Police and Crime Commissioner Steve Turner** received correspondence from several retailers operating across Cleveland about their ongoing issues with retail crime.



STEVE TURNER
PCC for Cleveland

Their concerns included recurrent problems with prolific shoplifters, antisocial behaviour around retail venues and violence against shop workers.

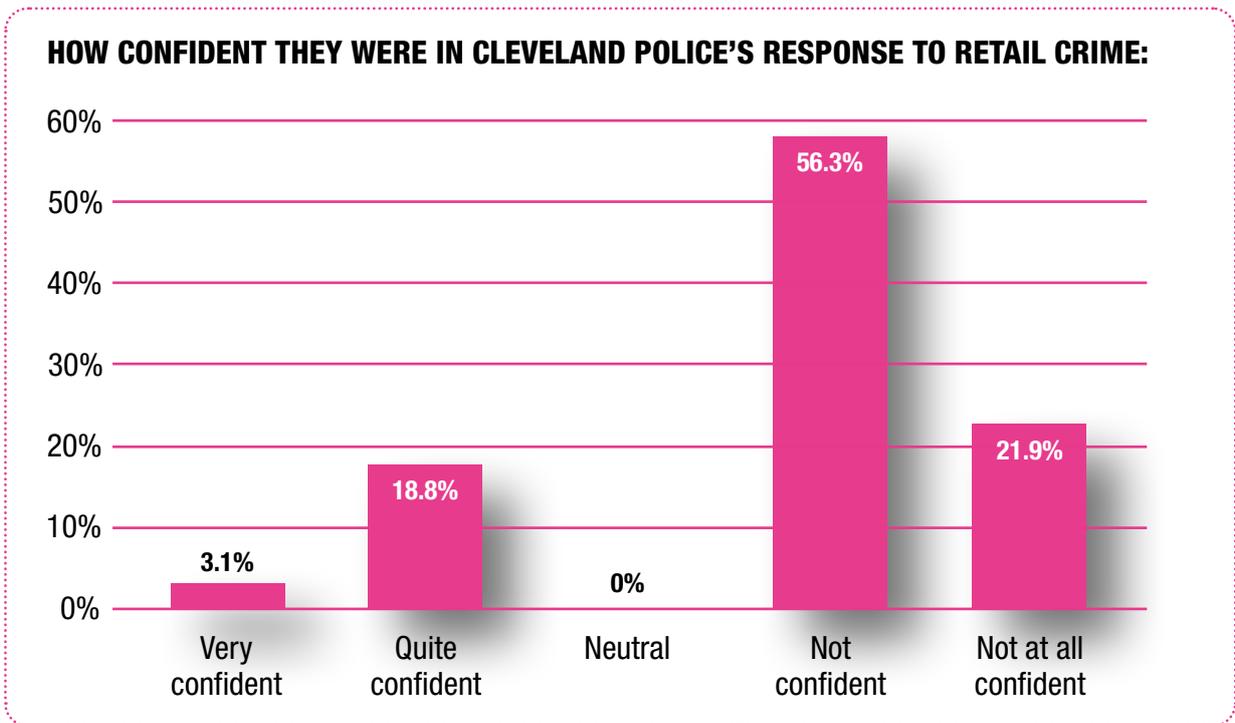
With more than 7,500 shoplifting offences recorded in a one-year period, equating to an average of more than 20 offences per day, this was an issue that Steve was keen to address in partnership with the retail community.

CLEVELAND RETAIL SAFETY SUMMIT

As a former retailer himself, Steve wanted to host an **engagement event** for retailers to have their say on the issues affecting their businesses. An invitation was distributed to retailers of all sizes to attend the workshop, which was held in Middlesbrough in October 2023.

Over 30 representatives of Cleveland's retail community attended the event to share their views.

They were asked how confident they were in Cleveland Police's response to retail crime. Their answers were as follows:



CLEVELAND: Cleveland's retail crime initiatives

TOP ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY RETAILERS

**POOR COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN POLICE AND
RETAILERS**

**SHOPLIFTERS NOT
DETERRED AS THEY
HAVEN'T FACED ANY
CONSEQUENCES**

**PROLIFIC/REPEAT
OFFENDERS**

TOP SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED BY RETAILERS

**BETTER
COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN POLICE AND
RETAILERS**

**TOUGHER SENTENCING
OR FINES FOR
OFFENDERS**

**BETTER REPORTING
OPTIONS**

HOLDING POLICE TO ACCOUNT ON BEHALF OF RETAILERS

With a range of information collected at the engagement event, Steve put the concerns of retailers directly to Chief Constable Mark Webster in a scrutiny session in late 2023 dedicated to retail crime.

The force provided comprehensive updates on their **Retail Crime Strategy**, which includes a **named point of contact** for each local policing area, the identification of the **most vulnerable stores** and ongoing **partnerships with National Retail Crime Solutions**.

Cleveland Police has one of the **highest positive outcome** rates in the country for shoplifting. In January 2024, Cleveland secured positive outcomes in 26.6% cases – **higher than most** similar forces and the national average.

Steve was assured by the force's progress in tackling retail crime and the retailers who attended the Retail Safety Summit were given feedback following the scrutiny session.

ENSURING GOOD POLICING PRACTICE THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

Steve is one of the only Commissioners in the country to opt for a PCC-led police complaints model, allowing for an enhanced and independent approach to handling dissatisfaction against police.



CLEVELAND: Cleveland's retail crime initiatives

In addition to the correspondence from retailers to the PCC's office, a number of complaints were received from retailers who felt they didn't receive the service they expected from Cleveland Police.

Through **effective customer service work**, the PCC's **Resolution Team** identified isolated examples where the investigatory response to retail crime by Cleveland Police could have been greatly improved.

This resulted in an organisation-wide awareness campaign to remind Cleveland Police's workforce of the wider retail crime strategy, with the overall aim of ensuring the Force provides the **best possible service** to the retail community.

BUILDING CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

In January 2024, Shadow Policing Minister Alex Norris tabled an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which would make it a specific criminal offence to assault a retail worker.

The Protection of Workers Act in Scotland already provides specific protections to shop workers, but there is nothing specific in legislation in England and Wales which offers the same provision.

On behalf of the area's retailers, Steve has written to each of Cleveland's MPs to ask them to provide bipartisan support for Mr Norris' amendment.



WEST YORKSHIRE: West Yorkshire Forensic 'SmartTag' technology

West Yorkshire Combined Authority's **Violence Reduction Partnership** is using a forensic marking technology to reduce retail crime.

The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), delivered by the **Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin**, funds the use of the forensic marking spray 'SmartTag' to help reduce offending and serious violence.

Security staff at two shopping centres in Wakefield have been trained and equipped to use devices that tag objects or individuals with a unique forensic code; this can then be used by the police to identify items or suspects involved in criminality.

Director of the West Yorkshire VRP, Det Ch Supt Lee Berry, said:

“ We have continued to fund the use of forensic marking sprays in the Wakefield District, as we know just how effective they are in influencing behaviours and preventing situations from escalating.

“ The retail sector is crucial to our local economies, and it is vital that staff and visitors remain protected, particularly from any potential of serious violence. ”

Inspector Paul Fraser of West Yorkshire Police said:

“ We hope that this partnership work will make people think twice about committing crimes against businesses in the city.

“ Any individuals or objects sprayed by security staff will be marked with a unique code, assisting us in investigating crimes and returning stolen property. ”

Equipping retail security staff with this technology follows earlier success in a **UK first**, where Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in the Wakefield District were **authorised to use the VRP funded spray** to deter and detect incidents, such as street drinking, shoplifting and abuse.

Since then, the Force has seen a significant reduction in calls to service and a positive impact across the city.

Inspector Paul Fraser added:

“ Calls relating to shoplifting offences also went down by 44 percent in the three months after it was introduced in the retail sector in Wakefield city centre.

“ By enabling our PCSOs to also use the cannisters, we hope to further deter people from committing offences in the city and help provide the evidence to prosecute when offences do occur. ”



ALISON LOWE OBE
West Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor
for Policing and Crime





5

WEST YORKSHIRE: West Yorkshire Forensic 'SmartTag' technology

On numerous occasions, the presence of the spray has de-escalated a situation and modified people's behaviours, in turn reducing the potential for serious violence.



Clr Maureen Cummings, Wakefield Council's Cabinet Member for Communities, Poverty and Health, said:

“ It is another step towards making our residents, businesses, and communities safer, and creating a better environment for people to live and work peacefully across the district. ”

West Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Alison Lowe OBE said:

“ Close collaboration with our retail sector is absolutely crucial if we are to effectively tackle the issues experienced, particularly against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis. ”





6 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: Northamptonshire's 'Operation Elegance'



STEPHEN MOLD
PFCC for Northamptonshire

Increasing numbers of shoplifters in Northamptonshire are being brought to justice, following the county-wide roll out of an initiative to better support victims of retail crime.

The innovative approach is called **Operation Elegance**. Since it was set up, Elegance has built closer working relationships between police, retailers, and other key partners. This has helped police tackle **prolific and violent offenders** and **organised crime groups** that are targeting businesses.

Operation Elegance grew from a project funded by **Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Stephen Mold** and developed with the Northamptonshire Business Crime Partnership (NBCP). The NBCP employed a **Specialist Investigator** to improve the response to retail crime and gather the best evidence for police.



First one, then a second civilian investigator (or Retail Crime Evidence Gatherer) was employed within the NBCP. These investigators have become a vital link between police and businesses, building confidence that retail crime is taken seriously.

The investigators work closely with businesses and have built a trust that has improved the flow of intelligence on both sides.

Northamptonshire Police set up a **dedicated Retail Crime Team**, who work closely with the NBCP investigators to gather quality evidence and build cases to target prolific and violent offenders and organised crime gangs.



6 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: Northamptonshire's 'Operation Elegance'

The relationship with businesses has also meant that best practice in retail crime prevention is shared, to help businesses protect their stores and their staff.

AS A RESULT:

- The Force is identifying more shoplifting suspects, which has wider benefits as many of the most prolific suspects have a history of offending across a range of crimes
- More offenders are brought to justice – the positive outcome rate in the first six months of the operation is 56% higher than in the same period last year



Offenders are brought to justice: 56% higher than in the same period last year

Ali Farr, Crime Manager for the Northamptonshire Business Crime Partnership (NBCP) said:

“ We have focused on local convenience stores with repeat and persistent offenders as we know these really blight the livelihoods and wellbeing of retail staff.

“ We’ve received lots of positive feedback from retailers that they are seeing a decrease in losses and staff are feeling reassured and safer.

“ The original funding from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner was vital in giving us that initial support to get the project moving and make a real difference to retailers across Northamptonshire. ”

Chief Inspector Carl Wilson, who leads Operation Elegance as Head of the Crime Management and Investigation Unit, said:

“ We have set out to make Northamptonshire a hostile place for retail crime offenders. As well as working closely with the Business Crime Partnership and individual and national retailers, we are making sure that the Northamptonshire Police response to retail crime is seamless, so that county is a safer place for retail workers. ”

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Stephen Mold said:

“ This successful approach to retail crime is built on listening to and working with businesses. That has created strong relationships that has helped businesses to work with the police to bring criminals to justice and prevent crime from happening. ”





7

MERSEYSIDE: Using criminal assets to protect businesses



EMILY SPURRELL
PCC for Merseyside

In Merseyside, **PCC Emily Spurrell** is diverting money seized from criminals to a range of initiatives to protect businesses and retailers.

Working with the **North West Cyber Resilience Centre (NWCRC)**, the PCC is using money and assets recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act to offer a free police-backed cyber resilience programme to up to 300 small and medium businesses across the region.

The programme offers training and education to help tackle the growing threats posed by cyber attacks, such as phishing or malware attacks and sessions have been held across the region.



Additional funds are being used to drive the safety of retailers and shopkeepers by providing **SelectaDNA defence spray kits**. These kits can be used by security guards to mark potential offenders to deter and prevent attacks and criminal behaviour.

The kits are carried in a brightly coloured holder to act as a visual deterrent and signs are posted across stores to prevent incidents from ever taking place.



MERSEYSIDE: Using criminal assets to protect businesses

Once sprayed at an offender, a **unique DNA code** which is only visible under UV light will remain on the offender for weeks and can forensically link them back to the incident.

Businesses are also being supported to prevent crime through an easy-to-use data-sharing system, known as **DISC**, which enables stores to share information about crime and offenders, as well as safety and security issues, so they are better informed and can take action to prevent crime.

Using the **DISC smartphone app** or website, businesses can view ‘galleries’ of offenders, submit incident reports, provide intelligence, help name unidentified CCTV images and get alerts about incidents in their areas.

Merseyside’s Police Commissioner Emily Spurrell said:

“ Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our communities.

“ They provide a vital service and I’m determined to support initiatives which protect them, their employees, and their customers.

“ A key way I’m able to do this is by using the money and assets Merseyside Police strips from criminals and reinvesting it to schemes which enable businesses and retailers to protect themselves.

“ By doing so, we can turn bad money into good and prevent crime from happening in the first place, building a safer, stronger Merseyside. ”

Katie Gallagher, Co-Founder of the NWCRC, said:

“ The threat of cybercrime against businesses has been growing as cyber criminals use increasingly sophisticated methods and technologies to steal money, information, or blackmail business owners. One cyber attack against a small business could completely bring it to its knees, so we take prevention against these growing threats and attacks very seriously. ”

Jonathan Coleman, Project Manager Liverpool City Freepoint, said:

“ I found the Security Awareness Training a really useful introduction to some of the key cyber security threats prevalent. It has certainly given me the confidence to advise businesses that LCR Freepoint engage with the National Cyber Resilience Centre and ensure they can operate as securely and safely as possible with the latest guidance and support. ”



THE
**CYBER
RESILIENCE
CENTRE**
FOR THE **NORTH WEST**





MOPAC: Use of retrospective facial recognition software and the London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership



SOPHIE LINDEN
Deputy Mayor for Policing and
Crime in London

Shoplifting in London has increased by 41.6% in the last year, and increased by 32.2% in England and Wales. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) recognises the vital importance of effective local policing and partnership working to reduce retail crime and protect shop staff.



Shoplifting in London has increased by 41.6% in the last year



Shoplifting in England and Wales has increased by 32.2% in the last year

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Safer Business Team developed a model to identify prolific offenders of retail crime using retrospective facial recognition software, combined with a London-wide roll out of **Operation Retail**, using a range of approaches to tackle retail crime.

Beginning in October 2023, the use of retrospective facial recognition software involved three sprints working with larger retailers, medium sized retailers, and small and independent retailers, to begin in late Feb/March 2024. In the first sprint, 10 retailers supplied data. Of the 401 images supplied, 149 had a positive identification. These showed that many of those offenders have links to much wider, serious crime in London. Out of 149 positive identifications, 12 offences had everything necessary for an effective investigation.



8 MOPAC: Use of retrospective facial recognition software and the London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership

Over the three full months of Op Retail, there has been an increase in MPS crime reports by an average of 42%. In December 2023, 55% of Theft Shop reports were triaged under Op Retail. This increase is seen as an indicator that retailers have increased trust and confidence in the MPS, which has been confirmed by discussions at the London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership.



Op Retail is still in its early phases and will be adapted to incorporate lessons learned and feedback. A formal review of Op Retail is planned for after the end of March 2024.

The **London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership** was set up by the MPS to engage directly with retailers and act together with MOPAC to tackle the increase in retail crime and associated harm. The Partnership's first meeting took place in August and was attended by leading retailers.



8 **MOPAC: Use of retrospective facial recognition software and the London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership**

Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, said:

“ I have attended events across London and have heard first-hand about the very real impact of retail crime, abuse of shop staff, and anti-social behaviour. I want to commend the MPS Business Crime Hub achievements so far including establishing this partnership, launching a strategy to tackle retail crime, and rolling out innovative approaches to finding prolific offenders through the use of retrospective facial recognition software. ”

Commander Kyle Gordon, MPS Senior Lead for Business Crime, said:

“ As part of our New Met for London Strategy we have been working hard to reset our relationship and build trust with our communities, and our work around retail harm has provided the opportunity to do the same with our business community. “Op Retail” and our London Retail Harm Reduction Partnership are laying the foundations for a range of activity we are undertaking to tackle all manner of harm in the retail space and reinforce our commitment to make London a better and safer place to do business. ”

Hannah Wadey, Chief Executive of the Safer Business Network, said:

“ Every day, our members tell us crime and staff safety are a priority, and they are investing millions into crime prevention measures. We welcome the introduction of Operation Retail to support this, and alongside the Retail Harm Reduction Partnership, we can agree action to help protect shopworkers and the highstreets. ”



WARWICKSHIRE: Using retailer data to target prolific offenders across Warwickshire

In Warwickshire, **PCC Philip Seccombe** is supporting a more joined up approach between police, retailers and licensed premises, with the aim of tackling prolific offending in shops, bars and pubs across the county.

He has provided £10,000 in grant funding to the **Warwickshire Retail Crime Initiative (WRCI)** to expand not only its membership but also to deepen the links with Warwickshire Police.

WRCI is a partnership of own-member schemes across the county's major town centres, with a current membership of 169 retailers and 100 licensed premises.

Members share data via **an encrypted app, DISC**, on which they can also report incidents and view images of individuals who have been reported by members for committing crime and/or excluded from entering member premises because of their actions.



PHILIP SECCOMBE
PCC for Warwickshire



As a result of the PCC's funding, single points of contact were established within the force for each area, enabling sharing of data from DISC and closer co-operation with WRCI members. A team of officers was then tasked to take action, and their efforts had an immediate impact with numerous repeat offenders quickly identified and put before the courts.

WARWICKSHIRE: Using retailer data to target prolific offenders across Warwickshire

Since the end of November 2023, more than 40 individuals have been charged for retail theft and related offences thanks to this new approach. A number have also received lengthier custodial sentences of between 20 and 40 weeks due to additional evidence of patterns of offending identified through the DISC data.

In addition, a further 29 out of court disposals have been made in relation to first time offenders.

Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Secombe said:

“ The level of incidents involving prolific theft against our retail premises is simply unacceptable, as is the number that feature some form of violence against shop workers or those working on licensed premises.

“ The funding given to the Warwickshire Retail Crime Initiative supports the development of better links between police and retailers to stamp out this kind of offending and also to give greater confidence to businesses to report crime in the first place. WRCI members have a wealth of vital intelligence which can assist the police and by forging these closer links, more targeted action can be taken against those responsible. ”

Peter Guillaume, Board Member of WRCI added:

“ This scheme has forged closer links with Warwickshire Police to make best use of the very considerable volume of information reported by members. For example, police conducted a **town centre shop lifting operation in Nuneaton**, with the majority of the target data supplied by WRCI from DISC. This resulted in the arrest of nine people, of which five were remanded in custody. Numerous fines, compensation orders, rehabilitation orders and victim surcharges followed. ”





DERBYSHIRE: Business Crime Reduction Co-ordinator



ANGELIQUE FOSTER
PCC for Derbyshire

Police and retailers across Derbyshire and Derby City are showing a united front against shoplifting and shopworker abuse thanks to a successful partnership.

The **Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP)**, funded by **Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner Angelique Foster**, was launched to bring businesses, the Police, and other key organisations together to protect high street retailers from anti-social behaviour (ASB) and criminality.

The Commissioner's funding secured a **BCRP Coordinator post** who has assisted in the roll-out of **ShopWatch Groups** across key retail areas. A radio system acts as an **'early alert' facility**, enabling members to contact each other, and the CCTV control room to report incidents or suspicious activity.

In addition, **DISC, an intelligence data-sharing app**, is helping to deliver a more coordinated and collaborative approach to crime prevention.



Presenting to **Safer Business Action (SaBA)** in Chesterfield, the Commissioner explained the work she has done to push for more robust enforcement around offences like shoplifting and abuse towards retail workers and set out how increasing partnership working is vital to reducing business and retail crime.

Police and Crime Commissioner Angelique Foster said:

“ We are investing in new tools and technology to arm businesses with the practical means to prevent crime, reduce their risk and to support each other. We are also listening carefully to retailers and businesses about what needs to change and acting accordingly.

“ Businesses and retailers have a right to expect an effective response to their issues. They bring value to our communities, providing jobs and supporting the economy. ”



DERBYSHIRE: Business Crime Reduction Co-ordinator

Assistant Chief Constable Michelle Shooter said:

“ We understand the very real impact retail crime can have on businesses and are committed to working with retailers and partner organisations to crack down on shoplifting and shopworker abuse.

“ Our officers will work with retailers to ensure they are doing all they can to design stores to make it difficult for shoplifters to commit crime in the first instance and when incidents are reported to us, we will follow reasonable lines of enquiry seeking to identify and bring offenders to justice. ”

Jackie Roberts, Business Crime Reduction Manager from the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce said:

“ The Commissioner recognises the need to help local high street businesses and protect them from crime. Her support has been pivotal to widening the service we provide to our Derbyshire Business Crime Reduction members and with on-going support we can continue to drive growth of the scheme. ”

The Commissioner is working closely with Derbyshire Constabulary to develop a robust **Retail Crime Strategy** and is fully supporting the **National Stop Shop Theft Campaign**. Both streams of work, and her support of the partnership, have involved extensive and ongoing engagement with retailers and businesses. These discussions have resulted in positive action including the launch of a **new Crime Management Policy**, supported by the Commissioner, confirming the force’s long-standing commitment to investigate all crimes where there are reasonable lines of inquiry – regardless of the value.

The force’s performance against such priorities and the overall response to retail/business crime is regularly scrutinised by the Commissioner.





GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY: Responding to retail crime



KATE GREEN
Greater Manchester Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire

Responding to retail crime and abuse is a top priority for community safety partners in Greater Manchester.

Led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), and the **Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire, Kate Green** – partners are working with retailers and businesses to respond to abuse, threats and violence against workers as well as addressing increased shoplifting.

A range of approaches have been developed, supported by GMP’s commitment to pursuing all reasonable lines of enquiry following a reported rise in retail crime. In 2023, GMP relaunched their neighbourhood policing teams with an **additional 264 officers** being deployed to add greater visibility, decrease response times, and secure prosecutions.

OTHER ACTION INCLUDES:

- Retail Crime Symposium in January 2024 – a problem-solving event attended by over 70 participants.
- Appointment of police **Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) at Inspector level** in each district.
- Easier sharing of digital information via a **Digital Evidence Management System**
- Use of **retrospective facial recognition software** to identify offenders.
- **Diversions approaches** including the Child First policing model for under 18s.
- **Days of action** with more planned in 2024.

Another key part of Greater Manchester’s approach is the establishment of a **Retail Crime Partnership Group**, including local and national retailers; representative organisations such as Retailers Against Crime, the British Retail Consortium and USDAW; and Greater Manchester’s 10 local authority Community Safety Partnerships.

Members share crime concerns, emerging trends, good practice, and resources to support retailers.



GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY: Responding to retail crime

The group has allowed local partners to better understand the drivers for shoplifting and staff abuse that range from national organised crime gangs, to shoplifting driven by poverty. With this insight, partners can consider different interventions, including enforcement, prevention and diversion into support.

GMP has led the development of a Retail Crime Delivery Plan, which was recently refreshed to take on board learning from the last three years.

THE PLAN DRIVES AND COORDINATES RESOURCES TO TACKLE AND REDUCE RETAIL CRIME AS WELL AS SUPPORTING VICTIMS THROUGH FIVE AREAS:

- Prepare (intelligence and engagement)
- Prevent (crime prevention and diversionary support)
- Pursue (enforcement, offender management, investigation and prosecution)
- Protect (victims and safeguarding)
- Governance

Kate Green, Greater Manchester's Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire, said:

“ Retail crime creates fear and misery for hardworking individuals who are doing a vital job to support their families and our communities. This will not be tolerated, and we will continue to work in partnership with our business community to find solutions together.

“ We are driving forward this work to ensure we remain in a strong position to support shopworkers and retailers to report crime and share evidence; identify prolific offenders and target resources where they are most needed; and prioritise police response to violence. ”

OVER THE COMING MONTHS, PARTNERS WILL DEVELOP WORK IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- For smaller and independent businesses by working with the Association of Convenience Stores and Federation of Small Businesses.
- Referral pathways into drug services.
- A bespoke approach for women to address the different drivers of offending.
- Use of Criminal Behaviour orders and the potential to combine these with support from diversionary services to prevent further offending.





DURHAM: 'Safer Business Group'



JOY ALLEN
PCC for Durham

Safer Business including retail crime is a key priority in **PCC Joy Allen's** Police and Crime Plan. **Engagement and listening** is an essential part of supporting

businesses for Commissioner Allen and she regularly visits businesses to understand the challenges they face in relation to shoplifting and uses this to hold the police to account.

At the end of 2023 PCC Allen undertook a **business survey** to find out more about the levels of shoplifting, as well as the impact on the safety of retail employees and the prevalence of abuse on shopworkers.

Commissioner Allen said:

“ We know the incidents of abuse and shoplifting that are reported to the police are just the tip of the iceberg, and that many are not reported. This is an issue I am determined to change, and I am already working closely with business and retail representatives to increase confidence and trust across the sector. ”

Based on feedback, the PCC implemented a **Safer Business Group** in December 2023, bringing together retailers, the police and other stakeholders to use their knowledge and experience to be a part of the solution to tackling retail crime.





DURHAM: 'Safer Business Group'

THIS IS ALREADY SHOWING BENEFITS INCLUDING:

- prevention measures based on evidence
- agreement that retailers will be a part of the Restorative Justice programme, focusing on the root causes of shoplifting and rehabilitating offenders
- plans to host a Retail Roundtable facilitated by the British Retail Consortium later in 2024
- ensuring that retailers in ASB hotspot areas benefit from extra patrols
- inclusion of shoplifting, where there is an ASB element, in the Immediate Justice pilot, meaning swift payback can be given to communities by offenders
- the uploading of SentrySis (CCTV) to help the police identify perpetrators.

Jason Birks, owner of an independent store in the east of Durham said,

“ Through sharing best practice at the Safer Business Group, myself and other independent retailers in the local area have implemented our own Shop Watch scheme. This has been great in enabling us to share information with each other through WhatsApp if we have had goods stolen from our stores. It gives the heads up to others to be on the lookout and stop offenders coming into their store. ”

On 23 January, the PCC held a **Public Accountability Meeting** in relation to Retail Crime where the Force answered questions, posed by businesses to describe the action they are taking to tackle rising levels of shoplifting in the region.

Through performance and intelligence, the Force has identified the **Top 10 retailers affected by shoplifting** and has undertaken focused work with them. This work began with the most affected retailer in October 2023 and there have already been significant results. Working closely with store colleagues, a Problem Profile was developed, and crime prevention advice provided based on findings. In the two months since changes were implemented the store has seen reports drop from an average of 27 per month to just 5. In addition, 5 prolific offenders have been arrested since work began, one of whom has received a custodial sentence.



WEST MERCIA: 'Calling time on retail crime'

West Mercia's Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion has been shining a light on crime in town centres and the impact it can have on businesses and residents.

In West Mercia, shoplifting has increased by 44% since April 2023. The rise nationally and locally has seen this crime type become a concern for communities. To address concerns, the PCC launched a **'Calling Time on Retail Crime'** campaign in January.

Falling under the PCC's priority to reassure communities, within his Safer West Mercia Plan, he announced a public holding to account meeting with West Mercia Police's Temporary Chief Constable, Alex Murray, to give businesses, retail workers and residents a chance to have their say.

Through targeted communications and engagement work, the PCC's office contacted local Business Improvement Districts, business groups on Facebook, and visited town centres to greater understand concerns and experiences. The PCC and his team also went out on patrol with local policing teams to see how they are working with businesses to tackle retail crime and bringing offenders to justice.

PCCs Making a Difference



In Focus: Tackling Business and Retail Crime



JOHN CAMPION
PCC for West Mercia



The information gathered during these engagements shaped the discussion of the meeting, largely focused on how shoplifting is being tackled, what is being done to prevent assaults on shopworkers, and how feelings of safety can be improved in town centres.



WEST MERCIA: 'Calling time on retail crime'

The hour-long session was filmed and made available to the public to watch. During the meeting, the Temporary Chief Constable outlined the work that has taken place to arrest prolific offenders, while acknowledging more can be done to give victims the high-quality service they expect and deserve.

Using the resources available to tackle concerns, the PCC invests more than £200,000 into five Rural and Business Officers, covering each Local Policing Area, to proactively engage with communities. Additionally, the PCC also provides funding of over £200,000 for the **We Don't Buy Crime** scheme to ensure resources such as **Smartwater** are available to target acquisitive crime.

The PCC has also invested in the Licensing Security and Vulnerability Initiative through the Telford and Wrekin Community Safety Partnership to ensure the self-assessment tool designed to help owners and operators of licenced premises provide a safer and more secure environment for their managers, staff and customers.

PCC John Campion said:

“ I am focused on tackling retail crime as I understand the significant impact it is having on local communities.

“ While I'm reassured that West Mercia Police is taking the issue seriously and progress is being made, I will continue to support and challenge the Chief Constable to ensure this is seen and felt across the three counties.

“ Retail crime won't stop overnight, so I am continuing to back the force with the resources it needs. Through my budget proposals for 2024/25, I'm backing the creation of town centre-based policing teams who will work in hot-spots to drive down retail crime and take prolific offenders off our streets. ”



DORSET: Tackling business crime

Tackling business crime is a key feature of Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner David Sidwick's **Police and Crime Plan**. Since coming to office, he has been instrumental in funding and backing several initiatives aimed to support businesses.

These include the creation of the **Dorset Safer Business Partnership** in November 2021; a strategic group consisting of the OPCC, Dorset Police and local business lead representatives working together under four key areas – crime prevention, crime reporting, engagement and visibility, cyber-crime, and fraud. Work is focused on improving the reporting process to make it quicker and easier to report crime and provide quality evidence to support prosecutions.



In September 2023, the PCC provided grant-funding to **UK Partners Against Crime (UKPAC)** to reach up to 200 businesses that sit outside of the **Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP)** and **Business Improvement District (BID)** areas. UKPAC collate, triage, and provide a direct crime reporting service with members benefitting from having the process completed on their behalf to gain effective prosecution against repeat offenders.

In November 2023, he also launched the PCC Business Crime Community Fund, to support Dorset BIDs, providing grants up to £5,000 towards initiatives to reduce business crime and abuse against shop workers. An example of one of the initiatives funded is improvements to CCTV cameras, with the PCC's grant matched funded by the BID. In another part of the county, BIDs used their funding towards the support of a Business Crime Reduction Partnership.

The PCC also engages regularly with independent retailers and is an active supporter of Dorset's Shop Watch and Hotel Watch schemes.



DAVID SIDWICK
PCC for Dorset

DORSET: Tackling business crime

He has participated in Safer Business Action Days and been involved in the launch of a Town Team in Bournemouth, which aims to reassure businesses, residents, and visitors that police and partners are prioritising keeping the town safe.

Within the Force, the PCC has ensured there is a dedicated strategic lead for business crime. Dorset Police has also revised their Business Crime Strategy and developed a Business Crime Tactical Plan - both in alignment with the Government's National Retail Crime Action Plan.

The Force also launched Op Shopkeeper in November 2023, which focuses on the identification and prosecution of prolific shoplifters and high harm offenders. Op Shopkeeper has already identified and prosecuted several prolific offenders.



Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, David Sidwick said:

“ I am clear, business crime is not a victimless crime. From speaking to business owners and staff, and in my role as a #ShopKind champion, I know how serious and damaging incidents of shoplifting and threats and violence can be. I am firmly committed to driving down these offences and keeping retail workers safe. ”

Gareth Lewis, Southern Co-op's loss and prevention security services manager, and representative on Dorset Safer Business Partnership said:

“ To have a Police and Crime commissioner who is actively backing this is a big step. This partnership and the work we are doing is unique and will benefit the whole community. The Dorset Safer Business Partnership is trailblazing what can be achieved when everyone works together. ”



WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON: Wiltshire and Swindon's Action on retail crime

Over the past twelve months **Wiltshire and Swindon PCC, Philip Wilkinson**, has made significant efforts to work with local councils, MPs and the retail sector to reduce retail crime within the force's town centres.

In **Swindon**, where there have been problems with **anti-social behaviour and shoplifting**, the Police and Crime Commissioner has joined local officers on patrols where he has spoken to retailers about their concerns.

Their initial assessment centred around a lack of proactive police response in dealing with prolific shoplifters already known to both retailers and the police and the online reporting system being too time-consuming and cumbersome including many questions deemed unnecessary by the retailers.

As part of a **Safer Streets Funding bid** supported by the **OPCC, Swindon town** centre benefitted from **an increase in CCTV coverage** and **increased street lighting**, which supports the Chief Constable's commitment to creating safer public spaces.

PCCs Making a Difference



In Focus: Tackling
Business and Retail
Crime



PHILIP WILKINSON
PCC for Wiltshire and Swindon



Following "Business Action Week", where Wiltshire Police increased their engagement with businesses across Wiltshire and Swindon, the PCC challenged the force to turn the increased engagement into an increase in arrests and a decrease in shoplifting and anti-social behaviour.

WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON: Wiltshire and Swindon’s Action on retail crime

A new targeted operational model has been introduced by the Chief Constable, which will see **a more visible presence in town centres across Wiltshire and Swindon**. This was publicly supported by the PCC, who explained how the new shift pattern will lead to an “increased police presence over a persistent period of time” and remove the intimidating presence of shoplifters in Swindon town centre.

The PCC is also a leading voice within a new Swindon Town Centre Partnership, which has been set up with businesses, councillor leaders, MPs, Wiltshire Police and the Swindon Community Safety Partnership to share intelligence and to look at the validity of re-establishing a Business Improvement District in the town centre.

Philip Wilkinson, Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon, said:

“ Shoplifting has increased significantly, and I’ve spoken to the shop managers and shop owners who have shared their frustrations about the response they’ve received from Wiltshire Police.

“ I’ve challenged the Force to do better, to be more robust and to take action when it’s needed.

“ Both the Chief Constable and I know businesses and residents want greater public engagement with officers, more public access to officers and an increased officer presence at community level. I am confident the new operating model the Chief Constable has introduced will make a difference.

“ As ever, I will continue to scrutinise the police response on behalf of the public, alongside encouraging other partners, such as local authorities, to look more closely at how we can all work together more effectively to tackle this growing problem. ”





LANCASHIRE: Lancashire's Neighbourhoods Fund



ANDREW SNOWDEN
PCC for Lancashire

Tackling retail crime and protecting both businesses and employees, alongside customers, is something that is important to **Lancashire PCC, Andrew Snowden**.

Alongside proactive enforcement tackling burglary and robbery and anti-social behaviour, that matter most to anyone impacted by retail crime, Commissioner Snowden has supported projects that make a positive difference to businesses and the public through his **Safer Lancashire Neighbourhoods Fund**.

This has been seen in various projects, including funding of **enhanced licensing schemes** in Chorley, and **Town Centre Radios** helping address local issues in businesses in Hyndburn.

An example of this has been working together with the **Lancaster Business Improvement District (BID)**. After hearing about the challenges being faced by BID members, Andrew **funded a BID warden** who is now working with the local policing team, businesses and visitors to Lancaster town centre. The warden's role is to help address concerns before they escalate, lessening the need for direct police involvement, whilst gathering intelligence and offering support.



LANCASHIRE: Lancashire's Neighbourhoods Fund

Speaking on a visit to Lancaster, PCC Andrew Snowden said:

“ There is always a poetic irony when funding projects like this, utilising cash seized from criminals and pumping it back into the communities they previously exploited. That's exactly what I have done here in Lancaster, backing this project that makes a meaningful difference to businesses, residents and visitors with money removed from offenders' pockets. ”

Tony Johnson, Lancaster BID Manager said:

“ The fact that we have our BID Warden out 7 days a week, 365 days a year gives comfort to businesses, locals and visitors that there is a friendly face patrolling the street. By having our BID warden on patrol, we know from feedback received from our businesses that it cuts down drastically the amount of low level ASB in the city so the funding is vital to keep that going. ”



The scheme, after initially launching, was so successful that the Commissioner agreed to boost the project further, which has seen a BID Warden on duty seven days a week instead of the previous five, increasing coverage and boosting engagement. It also means two Wardens now work on a rota ensuring cover is available during any period.

BID Warden Max Dior said:

“ It allows me to have a bigger presence in the city centre. We do deal with the police on a daily basis, we feed them the intel back, the shops feel safer and the people in the shops see me every day and know I liaise with the police. ”

BEDFORDSHIRE: Cracking down on retail crime

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Festus Akinbusoye has launched his third **Annual Business Conference** which kicks off mid-February.

This is part of his wider strategy to combat retail crime in Bedfordshire.

The conference gives local businesses the opportunity to hear from the PCC and Bedfordshire Police on what is being done to tackle retail crime including **shoplifting** and plans for **Automatic Face Recognition**.

The PCC also recently joined Bedfordshire Police Community Officers and councillors to update local business owners on Operation Belleville.

Operation Belleville was launched to focus on locking up the most prolific shoplifters in Bedfordshire. This sees community policing teams giving a targeted approach on retail crime.

PCCs Making a Difference



In Focus: Tackling
Business and Retail
Crime



FESTUS AKINBUSOYE
PCC for Bedfordshire





BEDFORDSHIRE: Cracking down on retail crime

The teams are using things like information from the public to **identify the top 10 suspects** in different areas across the county as well as crime hotspots, gathering evidence to issue frequent offenders with Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) designed to stop reoffending.

The launch of the operation saw the PCC speak with local businesses, Neighbourhood Watch scheme volunteers and councillors to talk about retail crime.

PCC Festus Akinbusoye said:

“ This is a subject I have raised several times with the Chief Constable on the back of real successes on domestic burglaries in Bedfordshire.

“ It was very positive to have this opportunity to meet representatives from our business community, listen to updates on Operation Belville, the impact it is having in just 18 days, and the way the officers are working with the local authority.

“ This is a perfect example of what partnership working and targeted enforcement can achieve. I will continue to support and advocate for local people and businesses who want to work with Bedfordshire Police in keeping our county safer. ”

Following this, the PCC conducted **walk arrounds** in the local area to speak with local shops and businesses to allow them to share concerns and issues which he directly feeds back to the Chief Constable.

The Commissioner was able to reassure business owners that the strategy to tackle the root causes and longer-term issues around retail crime was proving to be a huge success.

As a result of the recently agreed precept, the investigation of retail crime will be improved by using **artificial intelligence**. CCTV will be put in the hands of police officers and supports the identification of suspects through **facial recognition**.





CHESHIRE: Keeping businesses safe on and offline



JOHN DWYER
PCC for Cheshire

The **Cheshire Retail and Business Crime Conference** was hosted by **Police and Crime Commissioner John Dwyer**, in partnership with Cheshire Constabulary, the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU) and North West Cyber Resilience Centre (NWCRC).

Organisations from across Cheshire convened at Crewe’s Mornflake Stadium, where the police and key partners presented the latest initiatives to prevent and tackle retail and business crime.

Sessions and presentations on cyber security, forensic property marking and a new police Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) gave businesses important information on how to protect themselves from criminals both on and offline, and how the police are using the latest technology to bring criminals to justice.



During the event, the NWCRC launched its fully funded, free **Cheshire Cyber Security Programme**, which has free membership and training for 150 businesses, worth £500 each. The NWCRC was launched in 2019 as a police-led, not-for-profit organisation to support small businesses with education, training and resources to tackle cyber-crime.



CHESHIRE: Keeping businesses safe on and offline

Police and Crime Commissioner, John Dwyer said:

“ Tackling retail and business crime is part of Cheshire’s Police and Crime Plan. I know that businesses face a range of threats both on and offline, so I wanted to bring the county’s business community together to share best practice and reassure them about the action being taken on these issues.

“ Whether a business is primarily affected by retail or cyber-crime, or both, there has been something for everyone here. Through better property marking and evidence-gathering technology the police are able to catch the thieves who target local stores, and the NWCRC’s **Cheshire Cyber Security Programme** will give businesses the know-how on protecting themselves from cyber criminals who want to steal their data.

“ It’s been great to see so many organisations engaging with the police, but it doesn’t end here. I look forward to working with everyone to make Cheshire an even safer place to operate a business.”

DI Dan Giannasi, Head of Cyber and Innovation at the NWCRC, said:

“ Cyber-crime is a growing threat for small businesses – one phishing attack or data breach can wipe out a small business completely. As a not-for-profit and police-led organisation, the preventative training and education that we do with businesses is of vast importance. We’re extremely pleased to be working alongside Cheshire Constabulary and the Police & Crime Commissioner to provide free memberships and training for Cheshire businesses.”





NORTH WALES: Cyber Security Event



ANDY DUNBOBBIN
PCC for North Wales

A conference in June 2023, hosted by **North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Andy Dunbobbin** and the Cyber Crime Team of North Wales

Police, taught local retail owners how to protect themselves from growing cyber threats. The day-long **‘Cyber Security North Wales’ event** brought together over 100 retail and other business owners with the police and the PCC’s partners to share cyber safety best practices. It featured keynote speeches, exhibits, and interactive workshops aimed at giving retail owners the knowledge to keep their businesses secure.

The event was prompted by the prevalence of cyber scams and online fraud, which account for almost half of crimes in North Wales. Cyber attacks have impacted major retailers, but also local shops who cannot afford such disruptions in pandemic recovery alongside rising costs and other economic hurdles. The local Cyber Crime Team and PCC Andy Dunbobbin’s team organised the conference as these vulnerabilities could put further strain on community businesses or have even more detrimental effects on their future.



NORTH WALES: Cyber Security Event

North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, Andy Dunbobbin commented:

“ The way crime operates has changed dramatically over recent years. Scams and online attacks currently account for almost half of all offences. The reality of these crimes means people can lose life savings in seconds, and businesses can lose their livelihoods and the confidence of their customers and suppliers.

“ Among the tips and resources shared were the National Cyber Security Centre’s guides for small businesses, a cyber ‘escape room’ demonstrating realistic attack scenarios and a showcase of CyberAlarm’s free activity monitoring system. Attendees learned how to recognise and protect against specific threats like ransomware, phishing, fraud, and data theft. The conference equipped retail owners to immediately improve their cyber awareness and resilience with practical steps.

“ With cyber risks growing, the North Wales Police Cyber Crime team and I affirm our commitment to partnering with local retailers on prevention.



“ They have been through so much in recent years, with the pandemic, energy price crisis and cost of living pressures. As such, cybercrime is a further problem that for many businesses could prove fatal. That’s why it’s important that events like Cyber Security North Wales take place, so that business owners know the police and I have their interests at heart and so that they have the tools and knowledge to get on with doing what they do best – growing their businesses and driving the economic engine that we all depend on. ”





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