

# *Arson Reduction Bid*

## Introduction.

The predominantly rural district of South Derbyshire is becoming an increasing haven for the unlawful disposal and abandonment of motor vehicles.

These vehicles, (of which the greater proportion are regular motor cars) are often abandoned in circumstances which cause hazards or at least annoyance to residents of local communities. Property, and in some instances lives are put at risk when such vehicles are targeted by arsonists, whose only motive is in the main, is anti-social behaviour.

Research has shown that by far the greatest proportion of vehicles set on fire are simply unwanted abandoned vehicles as opposed to those which are stolen.

The three agencies whose responsibilities include recording of such vehicles are the Police, Fire Service and local district authority.

## Scale of the problem.

The authority has direct responsibility for the removal from public land of abandoned vehicles, and as such are alerted in almost every such case.

The Police respond to majority of cases to ascertain in the first instance if the vehicle is subject to crime. Subsequent enquiries to trace owners are often lengthy, tedious and in vain, as an owner or responsible person is rarely found.

The Fire service are then called to a lesser number which are ultimately subject to arson.

As well as the cost to the Fire service, Police and local authority, (which is estimated to be in the region of £2,000 for each burnt out vehicle,) there is often an associated cost of neighbouring damage to street furniture, boundaries or indeed the road surface itself.

For the period January to December 2002, the district authority recovered 464 vehicles, which averages approximately 115 per qtr.

For the period Jan to Sept 03, the Police attended 202 abandoned / unwanted vehicles, (as opposed to abandoned stolen vehicles.)

For the same period, the Fire service attended 51 malicious car fires. Of these, approximately only 10 were stolen. (This figure is approximate as not every vehicle is ultimately identified.)

These figures clearly show that there are a large number of vehicles, which are abandoned, giving the potential for would be arsonist to target.

## Proposal.

The South Derbyshire Crime & Disorder Partnership are proposing a scheme whereby residents of the district can request the free disposal of unwanted vehicles, in a safe, lawful and appropriate manner.

Similar schemes, such as one in Bristol, have been operating for some time. However, the most successful of these schemes, are whereby the cost of disposal is met entirely by the project, as opposed to a mere reduction for the vehicle owner.

Administration for the scheme would be under taken by the districts enforcement officer, who presently has responsibility for the removal of abandoned vehicles.

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# ABANDONED VEHICLES

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The local Authority and the Derbyshire County Council have respective duties under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 and regulations made thereunder to deal with abandoned vehicles.
- 1.2 An abandoned vehicle is a vehicle, whether or not it is in a fit state for use on the road and includes any chassis or body, with or without wheels, appearing to have formed part of such a vehicle, and any load carried by anything attached to such a vehicle. NB This may include a caravan or trailer.
- 1.3 The Anti-social act of unlawfully abandoning vehicles on public land is commonplace throughout South Derbyshire. It is estimated that in the region of 500 such vehicles are abandoned each year in the district.
- 1.4 Approximately 10-15% of all abandoned vehicles are subject to arson. Approximately 90% of abandoned vehicles are unwanted by the owner / keeper as opposed to stolen.
- 1.5 The Vehicle Disposal Scheme will allow for residents of South Derbyshire to dispose of unwanted motor cars, situated within the district, by way of a collection service.

### 2.0 VEHICLE DISPOSAL PROCEDURE

- 2.1 Upon receipt of a report, the officer responsible for administration of the scheme, (*the officer*), will ascertain all relevant details regarding the vehicle and make contact with the owner if necessary.
- 2.2 The officer will then record the necessary details on the Vehicle Disposal administration form (VD01) in triplicate and update the appropriate departmental records.
- 2.3 The Council's contractor responsible for delivery of the scheme, (*the contractor*), will then be alerted regarding the vehicle and be supplied with two copies of form VD01. The third copy will remain with the officer.

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- 2.4 The contractor will arrange collection of the vehicle directly with the owner. Upon collection, the owner will sign form VD01 giving permission for disposal of the vehicle. The owner will also sign a disclaimer on form VD01 concerning any property in or on the vehicle.
- 2.5 The owner shall supply the registration document or other proof of ownership along with all keys for the vehicle, prior to it's removal.
- 2.6 The vehicle will be removed as per the current methods employed in the Abandoned Vehicles Procedure Policy. Upon disposal of the vehicle, the contractor will certify the two copies of form VD01.
- 2.7 One copy of form VD01 will be returned to the officer with the accompanying weigh certificate. The contractor will retain one copy of from VD01 for their records.
- 2.8 The officer will update the appropriate departmental records. The officer will also administer the recovery of monies due from salvage in accordance with the Abandoned Vehicles Procedure Policy.
- 2.9 The scheme will be piloted for a twelve month period and will be administered free of charge to the owner for ordinary motor cars. For larger vehicles, (e.g. Ford Transit type) a fee equal to the additional cost incurred by the Council will be payable by the owner to the Council.

### **3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that the vehicle to be disposed is that which is recorded on from VD01
- 3.2 The contractor shall only dispose of a vehicle when he/she is satisfied that written permission for the disposal of that vehicle has been given by a person entitled to do so.
- 3.3 No vehicle shall be disposed of when 3.2 above is not satisfied, without referral to the officer. If advice is needed regarding identity or ownership of a vehicle, this should be sought from the Police and /or legal services as appropriate.
- 3.4 If for any reason a vehicle is not available for collection as agreed by the owner and contractor, the form VD01 should be endorsed accordingly and returned to the officer for further enquiries if necessary.
- 3.5 The contractor shall be responsible for checking if a current Vehicle Excise Licence,

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(tax disc) is displayed in the vehicle. If so, the owner should be notified forthwith, for it's seizure, if required for a refund.

#### **4.0 GENERAL POINTS**

- 4.1 The scheme shall run for an initial period of twelve months from date of launch. Following this period, a review shall conclude if the scheme shall continue.
- 4.2 Regular liaison between the contractor and the officer should assist in the smooth operation of the scheme. Where problems are identified, these shall be brought to the attention of the officer in the first instance.
- 4.3 The contractor currently used by the Council for delivery of the Abandoned Vehicle Procedure shall normally be invited to deliver this scheme, at a cost to the Council comparable with that scheme.

#### **5.0 FUNDING**

- 5.1 Funding for the initial twelve month pilot of the scheme shall be by way of equal contribution from the Council and the South Derbyshire Crime and Disorder Partnership. Additional funding may be secured by way of a bid(s) to external sources.