



In 1989 the first public area CCTV cameras were installed in Northampton, in a car park which was closely associated with crime at that time. The scheme grew to include two other car parks and all three areas achieved significant reductions in crime. This early success encouraged Northampton Borough Council to install the town centre CCTV system in 1992 and the initial impact on crime in the areas covered was an impressive reduction of 30%.

Since 1992 there have been expansions to the CCTV Control Room to create one of the largest CCTV systems in the UK, with over 350 cameras. These cover Northampton's town centre, the bus and railway station, town centre car parks, residential areas, leisure complexes, arterial routes, as well as Daventry and Wellingborough town centres.

The cameras are monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by up to seven operators at any one time, with private video and telephone links to police control rooms. Videotapes are held for retrospective viewing as necessary. The CCTV Control Room, as well as responding to police and public alerts, monitors police radio frequencies for three areas, in addition to links with Retail Radio Link and Pub Watch Radio Links in Northampton, Daventry and Wellingborough.

"The CCTV system costs over £500,000 a year to run, and contributes to over 250 arrests each month", said Councillor Robina Foot, the Borough Council's Cabinet member with responsibility for community safety. "This accounts for a quarter of all arrests in the area and proves the significance of this CCTV system to the Community Safety and Policing Strategies of the town."

Close links to Northamptonshire Police have helped form an innovative and effective stance towards CCTV development and implementation. CCTV operators report incidents to the police control room and

monitor events reported to the police. In addition, operators proactively patrol the areas and respond to burglar and fire alarms.

Northampton Borough Council continues to embrace technological innovations with the installation of a Touch View System and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system, with Northampton nominated as the UK Home Office Pilot for ANPR. By using a Geographical Information System and touch screen technology, the entire CCTV system can be controlled from any one of the operator positions. This makes training new operators easier and the operation of the CCTV system much faster, efficient and effective.

Says Councillor Foot, "The ANPR system overlays the existing CCTV system and, through links with the police, we have developed a successful partnership which is now delivering significant benefits in reducing crime. During the six month evaluation of the ANPR Project, auto crime fell by a staggering 21% and overall crime by 11% across the whole Borough".

The ANPR System started on 1st April 2001 and up to 31st December it had resulted in 470 people being arrested and nearly 5,000 offences being proceeded. To deliver these results, over three million number plates have been read and in 80% of the vehicles stopped, the occupants were involved in some form of criminal activity.

The CCTV system underpins the Northampton Retail Crime Initiative, a partnership between retailers, Northamptonshire Police and the Borough Council. The scheme, along with other crime initiatives, proved so successful that the town received national recognition with a Safer Shopping Award from the Home Office in April 2002.

Using CCTV as an invaluable tool Northampton Borough Council intends to stay at the forefront of the fight against crime.

**Andrew Vaughan,
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Northampton
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examines the
improvements
that CCTV can
bring to city
centres...**



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