

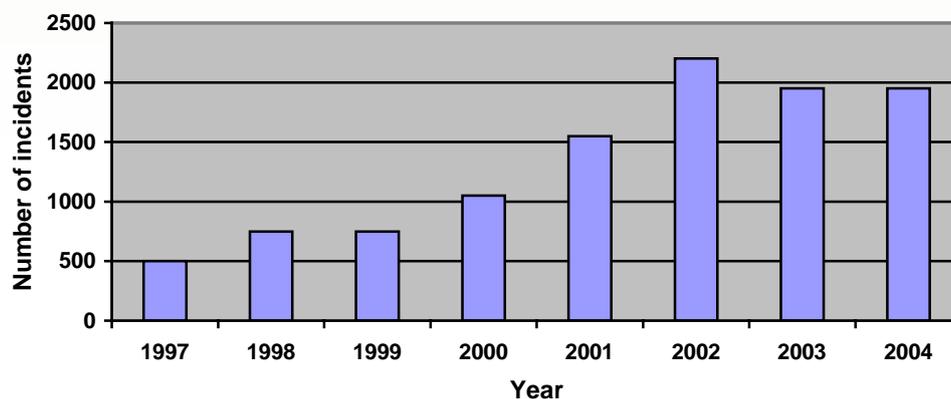
Operation Lasso

Maidstone Borough Council

Maidstone Borough Council aimed to ensure that Maidstone was no longer perceived as a borough where it is acceptable, or free of cost, to abandon waste. The initiative originated from an increased focus on environmental crime - including the financial burden relating to the problem of fly-tipping - and the recognition that increased cooperation between partners can have wide-reaching benefits.

There had been a huge increase in the amount of fly-tipping within the borough, highlighted in a survey and report carried out by the council in 2002. In 2004, there were over 1,900 incidents of fly-tipping in Maidstone and during 2004/05 the council spent £164,541 on removing and disposing of fly-tipped rubbish. The bar chart below demonstrates the rate at which fly-tipping has increased in Maidstone between 1997 and 2004.

Fly-tipping in Maidstone: Total Incidents



A pilot scheme, named Operation Lasso, was run over two days in May 2004 at four different locations in areas where fly-tipping occurs. The council worked in partnership with other agencies, including the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, the Environment Agency, the police, HM Customs (Fuels) and Intelligence, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, the Department of Work and Pensions and the council's own Benefit Fraud department.

Police outriders were used to identify vehicles that could be carrying waste. The vehicles were brought to the designated site and each agency carried out their own checks on both the vehicles and the occupants. Each operation lasted approximately three hours.

All of the agencies taking part in this initiative were extremely pleased with the results achieved. The Environment Agency reported an increase in the number of Waste Carrier Licences applied for following Operation Lasso and the wide media coverage it received. The second Operation Lasso initiative attracted not only the local press, but also local radio and local BBC television.

The operation was successful in deterring waste carriers from operating unregistered and without waste transfer notes, and potential fly-tippers. From an education and awareness point of view, operations such as this are invaluable as they act as a reminder and visual deterrent to relevant parties that the authorities are clamping down on fly-tipping.

Due to the cooperation of all the agencies involved, the cost of the exercise was kept to a minimum (£3,500). Each agency paid their own staff, with Maidstone Borough Council paying for police overtime as required.

Eight similar exercises were carried out in 2004/05, four in May 2004, two in September 2004 and two in March 2005. The project is ongoing due to its continuing success and further operations are planned for September 2005 and March 2006.

For further information, please contact:

Kay Goad

Education Officer

Maidstone Borough Council

T: 01622 602281

E: kaygoad@maidstone.gov.uk