Hertfordshire Taxi Marshal Schemes:

Evaluation Report.

County Community Safety Unit.

December 2010.
Introduction

Taxi ranks have always been reported, at least anecdotally, as a focus of disorder in the night time economy. Generally, the people that gather there do so in numbers, at the end of the evening after having consumed alcohol (often to excess). When combined with disagreements as people bump up against each other and jostle for places on the rank it is unsurprising that taxi ranks can be flashpoints for violence and disorder. Any scheme that aims to disperse groups quickly and peacefully away from the night time economy centre should be welcomed.

It is widely recognised that a range of initiatives are required in order to tackle the complex issues surrounding consumption of alcohol in the night time economy – from high visibility police patrols to alcohol workers in A and E departments. Taxi Marshalls are considered a valuable part of this range of interventions.

With this in mind, Taxi Marshalls were first introduced in Hertfordshire in October 2005. The first marshalled rank was located in St Albans. Subsequent schemes were rolled out in November of the same year (Watford and Hertford), January 2006 (Stevenage) and December 2006 (Hitchin). A further scheme was introduced at Batchwood Hall night club in St Albans in November 2009.

The aim of Taxi Marshalls is to reduce incidents of disorder on and around the taxi rank by providing an ‘official’ presence. Taxi Marshalls are not accredited to the constabulary and have no formal powers however all are Security Industry Authority (SIA) affiliated. The Marshalls have been trained in many aspects of disorder and crowd control such as diffusing aggression and mediation techniques.

The overarching objectives for this scheme are therefore to reduce alcohol related crimes, increase people’s feelings of safety, positive promotion of the night time economy and the safety of drivers.

As Taxi Marshalls also ensure safe passage for vulnerable clients a welcome outcome would be a reduction in the number of sexual assaults – however this is a sensitive area and would require further detailed analysis.

This service is delivered by Bradsec, a private security firm based in Hitchin. Bradsec have extensive experience delivering taxi marshal schemes, running and expanding schemes in High Wycombe, Windsor and Milton Keynes. Bradsec are a valuable partner for Hertfordshire with extensive experience of town centres in Hertfordshire and their related needs.
Currently, the service is part funded by the County Council and district and borough councils or through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) funding streams. In some areas licensed premises also directly contribute funding towards the scheme. The total amount of funding varies per area, based on numbers of taxi marshals required and the hours of work.

The service is monitored individually on an area basis between licensing teams and Bradsec but a quarterly meeting is also held to discuss the service countywide and allow best practice ideas to be shared between CSP’s.

The purpose of this report is to examine the crime and disorder statistics for the areas that have Taxi Marshalls in place and attempt to understand how the levels of disorder have been affected by the presence of the Taxi Marshalls.

**Methodology**

The County Community Safety Unit Analyst Team extracted data from both Police ‘crime’ and ‘incident’ logs. Previous attempts at examining the levels of disorder relating to the scheme have focussed on too wide an area to give a meaningful analysis. For example, an early analysis looked at incidents and offences that took place within a 100 metre radius of the taxi rank.

On balance, it is probably unreasonable to expect that a Taxi Marshall, who has to remain at the location s/he serves, can have an influence on an incident or offence taking place 100 metres away. This would be the case even if they were able to observe the event taking place from their vantage point. Often however, the incidents or offences recorded within that 100 metre radius take place around a corner obscured from view or (more frequently) occur inside a building (such as a pub or a late night takeaway). Clearly a Taxi Marshall can have no impact on these occasions and should not be measured against them.

As well as the counting of incidents that were not geographically relevant to the Taxi Marshall scheme, previous reports also considered incidents that were not temporally relevant to the schemes. Statistics were measured across whole weekends when the Taxi Marshalls were only on duty on certain days and at certain times. Whilst this would not necessarily prevent gaining an understanding of the impact of Taxi Marshalls on the level of disorder it is too likely that other factors might be contributing to any rise or fall in the number of incidents.

In order to be clear about the impact of Taxi Marshalls it has proved vital to look closely at the level of incidents at the time and place that they are
present, compared to the level of incidents that took place before the schemes were introduced.

In order to do this, the data was looked at in a number of stages.

1. Each taxi rank was identified by the street that it resides in.
2. The total number of incidents and offences that took place in that street between the hours of 9pm and 3am on either a Friday or Saturday night were extracted from Police systems. This was done for each year from 2003-10.
3. Fore Street taxi rank in Hertford was chosen for a closer examination of the data.
4. The incidents and offences that were not relevant to the night time economy or that it could not reasonably be expected for a Taxi Marshall to either deter or intervene with (such as traffic offences or burglaries) were discounted.
5. Of the remaining incidents and offences, each event was looked at in detail to see what exactly occurred and in what location. Any incidents and offences that were not relevant to the taxi rank (such as offences that occurred inside a pub) were discounted.
6. Those incidents and offences that were relevant to the taxi rank were compared over time determine if any trend was visible. The results and conclusions are set out below.

**Results**

The results from stage one, showed considerable variation over time. There was some consistency in some areas where a general trend of a rise to the middle part of the measurement was then followed by a fall. This was seen in Hitchin Bancroft and St Albans and to some extent at the leisure park in Stevenage.
For stage 3-6 of the process, Fore St in Hertford was chosen for a closer examination of the data.

*Crimes*

The first dataset used was for crimes. The following crime types that were not considered relevant to Taxi Marshalls were discounted:

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burglary in a building other than a dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage to a dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of controlled drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from a vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from an automatic meter or machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trafficking in controlled drugs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The remaining crimes that were committed between 9pm and 3am in the street that the taxi ranks are based in comprised of the following categories.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual bodily harm and other injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault without injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assault without injury on a constable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage to a vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other criminal damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other miscellaneous sexual offences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other offences against the state and public order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other possession of weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other wounding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of other weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public fear, alarm or distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racially or religiously aggravated assault without injury
Sexual Assault on a female aged 13 and over
Theft from a person

These recorded crimes were then investigated case by case to determine what, if any, relevance they had to the taxi ranks.

Between March 2003 and April 2010 there were 107 crimes committed between 9pm and 3am on either a Friday or Saturday night in Fore Street, Hertford that weren’t of the nature described in table 1 above. Of those 107 crimes, 19 (18%) were identified as being located directly at or around the taxi rank. This is the equivalent of less than 3 crimes per year.

When viewed as a trend over time the crimes look like this:

The graph does show a dramatic drop in offences between April 2005 and March 2006 (which coincides with the time that Taxi Marshalls were introduced) followed by a gradual climb and then a settling down. This might suggest a pattern where the immediate impact of the presence of Taxi Marshalls caused crime to cease on the rank but as the powers of the Taxi Marshalls became more widely understood criminal acts became more likely to occur. However this is an incredibly small dataset and it is not possible to make safe statistical assumptions based on the data.
**Incidents**

The second dataset that was used was for ‘incidents’ as recorded on Police systems. This is the method used by the Police for recording anti-social behaviour where no recordable crime has been committed.

Once again all incidents recorded between 9pm and 3am on either a Friday or Saturday night were extracted from Police systems. This time however no incidents were removed based on the category used. Mostly this is due to each category provided covering a large number of possible behaviours such as the category ‘Rowdy/Nuisance Behaviour’ which made it far harder to remove from the count without investigating further.

The decision was taken to look at each incident individually to determine whether or not it related to the taxi rank. Between March 2003 and April 2010 there were 138 incidents of anti-social behaviour between 9pm and 3am on either a Friday or Saturday night in Fore Street, Hertford. Of those 138 incidents, 35 (25%) were identified as being located directly at or around the taxi rank. This is the equivalent of 5 incidents per year, or less than one every 2 months.

When viewed as a trend over time, the incidents look like this:

![Incidents at Fore St Taxi Rank Over Time](image)

Interestingly, this chart differs significantly from the offences chart with a shallow line and very low numbers of incidents until around the time of the introduction of Taxi Marshalls in 2005/06. One possible interpretation of this is that the introduction of Taxi Marshalls has caused a dramatic rise in the reporting of ASB. Incidents that previously would have been unknown about to the authorities (but not to the unfortunates that experienced it) may now be being captured by the presence of Taxi Marshalls who are radio linked to the CCTV control room and who are able to contact local Police officers and PCSOs.
The numbers of reported incidents then fell over the next two years, presumably due to the presence of the Taxi Marshalls on the rank only to see a slight rise in the last year. The data does show however a steady decrease in reported incidents to the point where in 2008/09 levels were more than half what they were in 2003/04. This has been accompanied by a massive rise in 2009/10 to levels that are 25% higher than in 2003/04.

**Local Evaluations.**

In order to improve and evaluate the service further a number of ‘Driver Questionnaires’ were handed out across the services during July 2009. The results showed a positive regard for the service. Questions around feelings of safety showed that the vast majority indicated that felt safer to operate at night after the introduction of taxi marshals (appendix A). Other questions asked about taxi marshal’s communication skills, ability to deal with hostile situations and overall relationships between drivers and marshals. In the majority of cases, the questions were answered ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’

**Conclusion**

On the surface it would appear that Taxi Marshalls can have an impact on the levels of disorder on and around the taxi rank. What this also shows however, is that this is also based on a very small dataset and it is not possible to make safe statistical assumptions based on the data. Such low levels of incidents are vulnerable to ‘spikes’ in the data which may not reflect genuine trends.

There is no doubt that Taxi Marshalls provide a reassuring presence and it is highly likely that they reduce the number of incidents or offences committed on or around the taxi rank. Their impact on the level of disorder in the broader night time economy is doubtful.

It may be useful to examine the data from the leisure park at Stevenage as this has a significantly larger dataset to work from, however the process would be highly labour intensive and the outcome uncertain.

What can’t be seen by the statistics is the disorder that is prevented from occurring through the work that the Taxi Marshalls do. There is precious little anecdotal evidence about the work of the Taxi Marshalls. It would be useful if the Taxi Marshalls kept a record of the interventions that they have been involved in which have prevented situations from getting out of hand had they not been present and that would also have probably gone unreported.

1 Appendix A : ‘Drivers Questionnaire results’
One suggestion to record these interventions would be the use of Head Cams which are currently being piloted in Watford. Some benefits already seen from this method are that it provides evidence of overcharging and over ranking by the Taxi Drivers and has improved customers behaviour on the rank overall.

Based on what it is possible to tell from the data available however, it would seem that Taxi Marshalls have a positive impact on the experience of those using licensed taxis in Hertfordshire’s night time economy and an integral part of the package of interventions tackling disorder in the night time economy.
Appendix A – Drivers Questionnaire

**Taxi Marshalling Questionnaire Results**

Q1) How do you rate the dress and grooming of the Taxi Marshals?

![Bar chart showing ratings for Stevenage, Hertford, Hitchin, St Albans, Watford]

Q2) How do you rate the professional attitude of the Taxi Marshals?

![Bar chart showing ratings for Stevenage, Hertford, Hitchin, St Albans, Watford]

Q3) How do you rate the Taxi Marshals’ promptness and courteousness when meeting and greeting customers?
‘Very friendly and likeable marshals’
Taxi driver, Hertford

Q4) How do you rate the punctuality of the Taxi Marshals?

Q5) How do you rate the Taxi Marshals’ ability to take control of potentially hostile situations?

‘There’s far less trouble on the rank since they have been operating’
Taxi driver, Stevenage
Q6) How do you rate the communication skills of the Taxi Marshals?

![Bar chart showing communication skills ratings across different towns.]

‘They should be provided with a radio to communicate with town CCTV and Police control’
Taxi driver, Watford

‘It would help if we had more communication, like meetings with the taxi representatives to address issues’
Taxi driver, Watford

Q7) How do you rate the relationship with the Taxi Marshals?

![Bar chart showing relationship ratings across different towns.]

Q8) How do you rate the Taxi Marshals’ ability to fill cars quickly and keep the rank flowing?
'They provide a good service, maintain the flow of passengers when busy and form an orderly queue when required'
Taxi driver, Hitchin

Q9) How safe do you feel operating at night since the addition of Taxi Marshals?

‘Marshals are really handy when customers bully the drivers’
Taxi driver, St Albans

Q10) Have you felt safer to operate at night since the Taxi Marshals have been introduced?
‘Having marshals makes Hertford much easier and more productive to work in than Stortford’
Taxi driver, Hertford

‘The introduction of the marshals has improved the service offered to the public and introduced a sense of safety and security among the customers’
Taxi driver, St Albans

‘Excellent job, anyone who says otherwise is a fool’
Taxi driver, Watford