



THE DIGITAL BEAT

The Canterbury Beat – Edition #18: LOCKING DOWN RETAIL CRIME

With the summer shopping season ramping up, our local businesses are busier than ever. Canterbury's thriving retail scene is a massive part of what makes our city centre so vibrant, but high footfall also brings specific challenges—namely, shoplifting and organized retail theft.

This week, we are pulling back the curtain on our latest Retail Crime Initiatives to show you exactly how we are working with local businesses to protect our shops, their staff, and your high street.

Shopwatch: Real-Time Deterrence

Catching a shoplifter isn't just about responding after an alarm goes off; it's about stopping them before they even enter a store.

Instant Communication: Our primary tool is the Shopwatch Radio system, which directly connects our patrol team to retailers and the Canterbury BID Ambassadors.

The Network Effect: If a suspicious individual or known offender enters a shop at the top of the High Street, a description is instantly broadcasted across the network. By the time they walk down toward Whitefriars, security teams and our foot patrols are already waiting. It creates a digital shield that makes Canterbury a very hostile environment for thieves.

Preserving the Peace: The Heritage Watch

We regularly conduct targeted, high-visibility operational days specifically designed to disrupt prolific offenders.

Predictive Patrolling: Using live intelligence data, we map out "hotspot" times and locations where retail theft is most likely to occur. Instead of reacting to calls, we embed ourselves directly into retail spaces during these peak hours.

Supporting Staff: Retail staff shouldn't have to face abuse or intimidation while doing their jobs. Our physical presence in the stores gives staff immediate support and acts as an instant deterrent to opportunistic shoplifters who realize there's an officer just a couple of aisles over.

Beyond the Shoplifter: Target Hardening

While we focus on the offenders, we are also helping our local independent shops and major retailers "harden" their stores against crime.

Environmental Design: Our team regularly conducts security reviews with business owners. Simple adjustments—like moving high-value items away from the entrance, eliminating blind spots, and improving store layouts—drastically reduce the opportunity for theft.

Civil Banishment: We are actively supporting businesses in utilizing Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs). If an individual repeatedly targets Canterbury's shops, the community works together to legally ban them from entering participating stores entirely.

The Role of the Canterbury BID Ambassadors

Question: Who are they and do they work with the police?

The Answer: Those are the Canterbury Business Improvement District (BID) Ambassadors, and they are one of our closest daily partners! While they don't have police powers, they act as vital eyes and ears for the Beat Officers. They are constantly on the Shopwatch radio network, helping us look out for vulnerable people, reporting anti-social behaviour, and providing a welcoming face to visitors, which allows our team to respond rapidly when an incident occurs.

Over to You

As you support our local shops this week:

Do you feel a visible police and security presence makes you feel more comfortable while shopping?

If you work in city centre retail, what is the biggest security challenge your team faces on the shop floor?