

28 November 2006

NORTH DORSET RECOGNISED IN NATIONAL DIVERSITY AWARDS

A North Dorset team of Council and Police officers attended the annual Jane's Police Review gala awards in London where they had been nominated for a national diversity in action award.

The team, comprising Dorset Police, North Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council officers, was invited to the ceremony on Thursday 23 November at the Chiswell Street Brewery in the City of London. The awards recognised the efforts of police forces and local authorities across the country for helping minority groups or those who feel excluded from the wider community in their area.

The Dorset team was nominated for Operation Elder which dealt with travellers who flooded into the area for the Great Dorset Steam Fair in August 2005.

Joyce Guest, General Manager for Community Services at North Dorset District Council, said: "Operation Elder was extremely successful in improving relations with the traveller community and it also attracted praise from residents, fair organisers and the local business community."

The purpose of the operation was to set up an authorised site for the travellers to prevent them from trespassing on private or public open spaces. To do this the team had to build relationships with this notoriously hard to reach community.

Police patrols visited the site daily to ensure the needs of the travellers were met and that local residents and businesses were reassured regarding security matters.

The relationship was severely tested when one of the travelling community drowned in a reservoir at the fair site but the preparation work carried out by Operation Elder prior to the incident enabled the police to gain the confidence of the travellers and fully investigate the incident without disruption to the steam fair, the travelling community or local residents.

The nine-strong Dorset team was not successful on the night, with the award being won by Greater Manchester Police, but the national recognition of Operation Elder was reward enough for the hard work put in by the dedicated Police and Council Officers.

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Picture follows ...



Caption:

Nominees and award winners at the Jane's annual Police Review gala awards held at the Chiswell Street Brewery in London.

For more information contact: Joyce Guest, General Manager for Community Services at North Dorset District Council, on 01258 454111 or the Communications Office on 01258 484100.