

## Digging the dirt to beat the dumpers

Jan 5 2005

By Vince Gledhill, The Evening Chronicle



Secret spy cameras are to be used to dish the dirt on fly tippers.

The cameras can be buried in the ground and are switched on by any movement near them.

Their high quality lenses can provide clear pictures of the faces of people illegally dumping rubbish and their car number plates.

Another type of camera can be hidden in a briefcase and officers can use it to record anti-social behaviour such as dropping litter and allowing dogs to foul pavements.

The surveillance unit, which cost Castle Morpeth Council more than £7,000 has two miniature cameras, one with a wide-angle lens and the other with a zoom lens, which can be hidden in the ground to await illegal dumpers.

The council's decision to get tough follows more than 250 separate incidents of fly tipping in the borough last year in which more than 100 tonnes of rubbish was dumped.

One flytipping hotspot last year was Hagg Farm, north of Ellington, where more than 300 tyres, fridges and three piece suites were dumped. The area has since been cleared.

The council's new CCTV system is kept in a briefcase, which can be carried around to make unobtrusive observations of other anti-social acts.



It will also be used to catch vandals and capture other anti-social behaviour on camera.

The council is joining forces with Northumbria Police, Northumberland County Council and Morpeth Town Council to patrol problem areas.

Up to 20 staff will be out carrying hand held computers using GIS technology and digital photography.

They will have the power to issue £50 fixed penalties under the 1990 Environmental Protection Act and anyone who fails to pay within 14 days will be prosecuted.

The computers will also record acts of vandalism or flytipping and beam images back to base.

The council hopes that by acting instantly to clean up a site, one act of fly tipping will not lead to a flood of others.

Coun Andrew Tebbutt, spokesman for the council's Out and About unit, said: "The Council will no longer tolerate people abusing the local environment in Castle Morpeth. We recorded 103 tonnes of rubbish dumped by flytippers last year alone, in 252 separate incidents.

"That is nothing short of a disgrace and the people responsible should be ashamed of themselves.

"With the launch of the mobile surveillance unit and on-the-spot fines we are signalling to fly tippers, vandals and irresponsible dog owners that their anti-social behaviour will no longer be tolerated. We now have the technology to provide the kind of undeniable evidence needed to secure prosecutions, and mark my words, we will use it."