Crime down thanks to booze ban zone

ABERYSTWYTH'S alcohol-free zone has been hailed by the Home office as shining example of 'organisations and the community working together to improve safety.'

The town centre drink-free zone has helped to reduce alcohol-related crime in the town centre by 15 per cent since it was introduced in Aberystwyth in May 2005.

And the scheme is being highlighted as part of the Home Office's 'Not in My Neighbourhood' week.

The alcohol-free zone has given police the power to confiscate alcohol in bottles and glasses on the streets. Between June 2005 and May 2007, 633 alcoholic drinks were confiscated by officers.

Figures also show that overall crime in the zone has also fallen by 6 per cent over the past two years.

The Home Office said a review had proved the zone had been a success. A spokesman said: 'A review carried out earlier this year has shown Aberystwyth's alcohol-free zone to be a success.'

"Now, as part of 'Not In My Neighbourhood' week, the scheme has been highlighted as a good example of organisations and the community working together to make a community safer."

The Home Office's 'Not in My Neighbourhood Week' is part of its 'Changing Lives, Making Communities Safer' campaign.

Chief Inspector Robyn Mason, based at Aberystwyth, was instrumental in the introduction of the town centre alcohol free initiative.

He said: "When I became a town centre Inspector in 2001, I recognised problems being caused in the main by alcohol being drunk in the streets.

"And in 2003, Ceredigion County Council introduced the legislation to make the town centre streets an alcohol-free zone."

"This legislation has been successful because of a common-sense approach and vigilance of police officers and members of the public."

"Aberystwyth is a very popular university town, and we need to strike the right balance so that people can enjoy themselves here, whilst minimising the impact on the community as a whole."

"We will continue to work with our community partners to further achieve this."

Bronwen Morgan, chair of the Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership and chief executive of Ceredigion County Council, said:

"The Home Office review is an excellent example of the benefits of partnership working, and a clear demonstration of our philosophy set out within the community safety strategy."

Begging and vagrancy are down by 80 per cent in the alcohol-free zone, and anti-social nuisance and noise rates have also fallen by 10 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.