Cameras branded a waste of money

By Norman Williams

ABERYSTWYTH'S CCTV has come under fire after yet another eight-class crime was not caught on camera.

Shop owner Tom Jones, of T J Awards, in Bridge Street, has condemned CCTV as a 'waste of taxpayers' money' after discovering that when his £400 window was smashed last Tuesday night there was no-one operating the cameras.

Other traders have also complained about crimes committed at night that were not captured on CCTV.

This week both police and council officials refused to tell the Cambrian News when the cameras is manned and when it is not.

Screens are monitored by a Ceredigion employee for an average 14 hours a day. When not manned, cameras continue to record, but give only an overall view of the streets.

Officials said it would undermine CCTV's 'deterrent value' if law-breakers knew when the cameras were not being manually operated.

But rate trader Mr Jones said the camera system was staffed every night — certainly between 10pm and midnight.

He said: "CCTV seems to be a waste of rate-payers' money. What use is it when most crime involving fights, burglaries and damage to property, happens at night, and the system is not monitored?"

"Surely it should be monitored every night."

The Ceredigion County Council-run CCTV, which is housed in Aberystwyth police station cost £50,000-plus when it was installed in June 1999. It was part-funded by a Home Office grant.

Answering Mr Jones's criticism of the CCTV, police Superintendent Peter Williams said: "CCTV cameras operate 24 hours a day. The film taken is recoverable and can be scrutinised."

"CCTV is monitored by trained operatives employed by Ceredigion but, during periods they are off-duty, police officers and support staff take over the monitoring as and when other duties permit."

We monitor daily the pattern of incidents around the town, and plan the CCTV surveillance accordingly."

"The benefit of CCTV far outweighs its disadvantages."

"CCTV is doing its job and we are pleased with the results. But we are looking at ways of improving CCTV."

"We do not pretend that it is the panacea - but it has had a significant effect on the number of arrests, and helping to reduce the fear of crime."

Police report that one man was arrested - as a direct result of CCTV - following damage caused to property in Aberystwyth town centre on Saturday night. He has been bailed pending further inquiries by police.

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