

why a camera system ... and how does it fit into all the other initiatives?

The primary function of Neighbourhood Watches (NW) is to act as 'eyes and ears' of the community. Cameras are an extension of the 'eyes' component.

what does LPR stand for ?

LPR stands for License Plate Recognition also known as ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition).

what is an overview camera ?

It is normally identical to an LPR camera, but with different settings. It runs in colour (LPR cameras are set to run in monochrome), it is zoomed back to capture a wider area and gives vital information on the colour of cars and which way they turned. Overview cameras are generally mounted right next to LPR cameras.

will it solve our crime problem ?

Not entirely, but it has a proven track record shown by a dramatic drop in vehicle related crime in areas where it is used. Positive arrests are made!

how does it work in practice ?

It is a proactive system where license plates of cars are automatically read and logged when they pass a camera. The plates are continuously, automatically, checked against a database. If there is a match of a wanted vehicle, emails are automatically sent to volunteer responders, security service providers and SAPS. The multiple responders assist in locating the vehicle. The system is effectively the automatic 'eyes' of the neighbourhood, allowing residents to get on with daily life, but able to instantly respond when a known criminal enters the area. This makes for a sustainable NW able to 'fight smart' with the aid of technology.

do criminals not change their number plates ?

Yes, some do ... generally in the order of 2 or 3 times. Through our integration across all other LPR initiatives, these tend to be identified fairly quickly.

what else can it do ?

Besides the fact that every single LPR camera is at the same time also an overview camera, makes for ongoing monitoring of entry and access routes. Furthermore, identified suspect vehicles can be run through the database which allows us to identify any prior access to the area and provides investigators with a powerful tool to link various crimes.

does it work at night ?

The camera housing has built in infrared illumination which highlights the number plate to make them readable.

where else is such a system implemented ?

There are over 10 NW in the Western Cape currently employing the system. The City of Cape Town (CoCT) is currently rolling out an identical system.

is there any evidence that it actually works, or is this merely an expensive and wasteful exercise ?

Each NW using LPR camera technology has documented evidence of success. It is also far cheaper than employing additional staff which has far more limited capacity

Are the camera systems independent or like the one's that BKM and Constantia N/Watches have set up, what about the other NW's in our Valley ?

The systems will be compatible and run in tandem with a single database. **Each NW will manage their own funding drives and expansion programs but still operate from the central hub to maximize operation efficiency. There is ongoing resource sharing and collaboration amongst the NW's**

how are the camera locations decided on ?

Via discussion amongst active members, security providers and SAPS with input from other LPR users who have experience in the field

who owns the infrastructure ?

This equipment will be owned by the residents of Lakeside and Zandvlei under the banner of LCW – Lakeside Community Watch and will be integrated into the database via an entity called CVWA (Constantia Valley Watches Association) with representatives of all the participating Neighbourhood Watches. This ensures the safety of the assets and puts them out of reach from any state institution.

who collects the contributions ?

The NW committee

is the entity registered for tax purposes ?

Yes ... this is done through the Constantia Community Police Sub-forum, which is registered with SARS as a public benefit organisation (PBO)

does SAPS support this project ? what about the CPF and the City and DoCS ?

SAPS is very supportive and use existing LPR setups to gather information on criminals and evidence needed for cases. The Community Police Forum (CPF), the City of Cape Town and the Department of Community Safety (DoCS) are all supportive as well.

the output is only ever as good as the input ... where does the data come from ?

All NW's throughout the Western Cape are networked and share information gathered. SAPS is also a major contributor of data as are security providers.

who contributes to the data ?

Most data is gathered from SAPs, security providers, patrollers, radio holders who exchange suspicious vehicle information, victims of crime who call in to the Watch or just ordinary citizens who see something suspicious and phone it in.

where is the physical infrastructure housed ?

At the CVWA control room, on residents' properties, sides of buildings (cameras) and at wireless high sites (needed to get in line of site with each camera's wireless device).

is it monitored ?

LPR is proactive and so looking at cars going past a camera serves little purpose. However, having a dedicated controller in the Communications Hub to respond when there are alerts is a huge advantage.

The dedicated controller will be assigned to enter data, do checks on queries (crimes/possible criminals) and handle live incidents where footage needs to be rewound to get details and then relayed to respondents on the ground. This is done 24/7 365 days a year!

is this not a blatant invasion of personal privacy, is this even legal ?

Cameras will only ever focus on public spaces where there is a reasonable expectation by the vehicle or pedestrian to be seen. Capturing images in public spaces to fight crime is now widespread. It is only illegal if footage of a private space is used against a person to their detriment and without their consent.

is the footage freely accessible ?

No, it is only available to SAPS when requested via an authorised committee member and for the purpose of crime investigation.

is there a code of good practice that has to be adhered to ?

Yes, capture, access and dissemination of information is strictly controlled

if I contribute, am I guaranteed a camera next to my house

No ... cameras are placed strategically in order to maximize the efficiency of the system and to adhere to a strategic plan. The overriding rationale is to locate in such locations as to best improve community safety.

how do we prevent free loading ?

Communities triumph when they respond as a collective. We can't prevent free loading, but won't be discouraged from moving forward because of it. All we have to do is get a lot of people to give a little, then it is very manageable.

by what means are alerts sent out ?

Emails, sms's and other new, fast, low cost media and smart phone technologies

who responds, i.e. who gets these alerts ?

Patrollers, SAPS, security service providers and anybody who chooses to and is keen to help. Even a retired person who is at home can be a great help by looking out of his/her window to confirm the sighting of a flagged vehicle that triggers an alert after receiving an email.

is it all or nothing i.e. can the system only ever be rolled out if all the money is collected ?

No, it can be rolled out slowly as long as the server, software and high sites are purchased and put in place.

what are upfront and what are the ongoing running costs ?

Upfront costs include server, cameras, wireless devices and software. Ongoing costs include: monthly maintenance, cleaning, servicing of cameras and WIFI Stations; focusing of cameras if required and "Twigging" of wireless radios if required; checking of all wired connections (network) and replacing of RJ45 connectors and Cat5 cable if required; checking of all brackets, bolts and screws and mountings and cover with "grease" to help prevent rust; re-aligning wireless radios for better TX/RX if required. There are generally license fees to be paid annually or every 3 years, upkeep of infrastructure and a contribution towards electricity.

what about insurance ?

Yes we do have insurance ... however there has been no documented case of either vandalism or theft of LPR infrastructure in the Western Cape. Cameras are placed high up and are difficult to steal. Camera housing's are secured with a locking system.