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Making the Difference

Former Caspar Boss Thanks Hard Working Residents

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THE former manager of the CASPAR project on the Spring Boroughs and Semilong estates in Northampton has expressed his thanks to all residents who have worked so hard on improving their community.

Sergeant Mark McDonnell, who left his role at the end of March to take up a new challenge as Acting Inspector within the Countywide Traveller Unit, spent three years in charge of the project that set out to change the face of one of the town's oldest areas.

Central to the fight against drug dealers and the link to acquisitive crime was work undertaken to tackle the issues associated with prostitution and drugs, which was carried out through the work of the SWAN partnership.

SWAN – Sex Workers Around Northampton – is a service provided by Northampton Primary Care Trust.

During the last three years, almost 400 cautions were issued to 138 different women for soliciting for prostitution. Seven prostitutes have had an ASBO imposed on them.

In the same period, 108 kerb crawlers were prosecuted and Sergeant McDonnell also sent out 435 warning letters to motorists seen in the area.

More than 25 premises used for drug dealing and prostitution were closed in joint action with Northampton Borough Council and other landlords, two using the new police powers to close crack houses.

And of residents surveyed in Spring Boroughs and Semilong, 60 per cent said that the area was now safer to live in than before 2002 – 67 per cent stating that there was now less of a problem with prostitution.

Total crime on the beats covering the CASPAR area fell by 33 per cent, with drops recorded in dwelling burglaries, robbery, violence and vehicle crime.

Sergeant McDonnell said: "The statistics show what has been done but the real satisfaction for me has come from speaking to the people who live in Spring Boroughs and Semilong and who have said to me that their area has improved so much.

"For me it has been tremendously rewarding working with the community and I would like to place on record my sincere thanks for all the hard work put in by the residents associations, voluntary groups and other hard-working individuals who made this role all the more worthwhile.

"There are now strong partnership arrangements in place between the community and all agencies and although there is no longer direct involvement from ourselves and the local authorities, the processes are in place for the improvements to be sustained and continued in the years ahead."

