

Top cop helps to put brakes on criminals

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A POLICE chief who got on his bike to praise a constable's crime-busting idea ended up helping him arrest a burglar. Chief Supt Howard Crowther, commander of the Chapeltown division in Leeds, admitted he was "slightly sceptical" when PC Dave Brook first suggested officers could be more effective on mountain bikes in certain areas. But even his boss had to admit the idea had been a tremendous success and netted criminals, drugs, cash and firearms since officers began their bike patrols earlier this year.

To show public support for the PC's brainchild, the divisional commander went out on mountain bike patrol with PC Brook yesterday. Just 90 minutes later, the two of them spotted a suspect in Meanwood – and ended up arresting the 19-year-old who was wanted on an existing warrant.

Chief Supt Crowther, who began his police career as a beat officer in Halifax, admitted he had been amazed by the results of officers on mountain bikes. He said: "We started by using them in Roundhay Park where there had been 20 robberies over a period of time. We put a mountain bike team in there, along with Special Constables – and there was not one robbery over a period of a month.

"To some extent I'm here because PC Brook has proved me wrong. "I can't argue with the fact that consistently he and his colleagues are producing results. "They are making arrests and, most of all, the community they are working in is benefiting too. "It is, however, the positive approach of the officer himself and the enthusiasm with which he approaches his work that I think is the key. The bikes merely make him even more effective and give him a greater visible presence in the area. "He has quite literally been putting the brakes on criminal activity." PC Brook said: "Just last week, we spotted five youths believed to be dealing drugs down an alleyway on Stonegate Road, Meanwood. "Because we were on the bikes we could get to them in seconds – the element of surprise helps us."

The police bikes have flashing blue lights and sirens fitted to their handlebars. Chapeltown division now has nine police mountain bikes split into teams covering the Chapel Allerton, Moortown and Roundhay wards.

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