Introducing StreetSnap: An Initiative to Transform the Capture, Recording & Intelligence Gathered about Hate Graffiti across the Bridgend County Borough

STREETSNAP SMART PARTNERSHIP

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Introduction

National hate crime figures during 2022 increased by around 26% (Hate crime England and Wales, 2021-2022), however, hate crime and incidents are still significantly under reported. Hateful graffiti is classed as a hate incident, and depending on severity, a hate crime (Home Office, 2023). However, currently, there are no systems in place, let alone technology to drive the reporting and monitoring of this. Within Wales, it is mandated that local Community Cohesion Officers, at an operational level categorise graffiti. This categorisation is deemed of utmost importance to the counter-hate and counter-extremism agenda (Community Cohesion Programme Workplan, (2022) Themes 3, and 5), yet there are no achievable ways for this data to be systematically recorded and no training is in place for Co-ordinators. The development of a monitoring instrument to streamline processes is fundamental and has been made possible through [Welsh Government SMART Partnership Funding](). This funding has enabled a multi sector approach, joining [Swansea University]() academics and technological expertise from [Legal Innovation Lab Wales]() with [Bridgend County Borough Council.]() This report delineates the case for this academic, evidence based, unique technological solution which can simultaneously support staff and address multiple Policy agendas, achieving participatory and transformational change, having societal, economic, and technological impact.

From here, this report is divided into six Sections. The first section, **Context** situates the issue of hate graffiti and visuals in the Bridgend County Borough highlighting it as hate crime and illustrating the harms inflicted to community cohesion. It also provides a summary of the Community Safety Partnership's work in this area to date. **Understanding Hate in our Communities** explains the vital importance of paying attention to visual representations of hate in terms of who is targeted, the kinds of images seen in our communities, and the local and more far-reaching effects and consequences connected to extremism and radicalisation. **The current Situation,** summarises the present inadequate system of reporting, monitoring and removal of hate visuals in the Borough, identifying three substantive problems. Following this, **Transformative change via an Innovative Technological Solution: StreetSnap,** identifies solutions to these 3 problems via StreetSnap. **StreetSnap: Benefits and Impact** explains how data collected by StreetSnap will aid Bridgend Community Safety Partnership to meet key objectives around training and capacity building, tension monitoring and mitigation, and prevention of hate and extremism, with benefits to academic scholarship and research. The final section, **Summary -** reestablishes the key benefits of StreetSnap and outlines the next steps in the Smart Partnership Pilot Project.

Context

Tackling extremism, hate crime, and building resilience and community cohesion is an ongoing dominant issue for Councils across the UK (Local Government Association, 2022). Post Brexit

tensions have given way to wider consideration of responses to community tension and the delivery of the community cohesion agenda (Foster, Williams & Burlap 2023). The impact of extremism on local areas can be significant and ranging. At its most extreme are rare, large scale terrorist attacks which wreak havoc, devastation, and loss of life. On a smaller, but no less significant scale are the pervasive, non-violent harms done to individuals, groups and communities via the presence of visual representations of extremist ideologies, hate and intolerance communicated through the use of hate graffiti and stickering in the locale. The landscape of extremist threats in and to our communities is in constant evolution and as such a dynamic, joined-up, partnership approach to counter such challenges is essential to respond, understand and build resilience from within (Local Government Association, 2022).

The threat of extremism and terrorism is addressed through CONTEST, the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy. In Wales this is supported through the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit, whose aim is to 'work more effectively in its response to the threat of National and International terrorism and extremism' (Wales Safer Communities Network). Through PREVENT, at a local level, Bridgend Community Safety Partnership is already undertaking important work around counterterrorism in seeking to address the social harms of extremism; the impact on sense of identity, safety and belonging, and the economic impact on the community (Local Government Association, 2022). Also, its focus, is early intervention work which aims to counter harmful ideologies, radicalisation, and criminality. Since 2018, Bridgend Community Cohesion Lead, and the Partnership Community Safety Manager have been working alongside Dr Nouri to try to further understand and highlight the importance of hateful and extremist visuals. Previous delivery of training to some elected members of Parliament, line managers and frontline staff on when, why, and how to report, monitor, collate and remove hateful visuals highlighted a lack of connection and understanding of the way in which the presence of hate visuals counter this agenda (Nouri, 2022). This training further emphasised that there exists a knowledge gap around the importance of paying attention to hate visuals in relation to policy and partnership agendas, and a disconnect therefore in terms of the reporting, monitoring and removal processes of hateful visuals. The training was successful in establishing demand and demonstrated the need to truly imbed academic knowledge to advance the aims of the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership. As a compliment to the work already being delivered by Bridgend County Borough Council and the Community Safety Partnership, this report seeks to define the case to reform the afore mentioned processes and affect participatory, transformational change at all levels within Bridgend County Borough Council, and to partnership organisations, though an academic, evidence-based training package and innovative technological solution; the development and piloting of the 'StreetSnap app'.

Hateful Graffiti as Hate Crime

The presence of graffiti in public spaces is an issue which local authorities have long sought to tackle as an act of illicit criminal damage, and a legal requirement under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Removal of the offending scrawl acts to reclaim the space physically and visually for

the community and the local authority (Wilson, 2014; Halsey & Young, 2002). While graffiti is broadly understood as problematic due to the harm it causes to the community in terms of property damage and fear of crime illustrated through broken window theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) - knowledge of the differences in context, provenance, and forms of graffiti are not so evident. Aid in understanding the motivations of the author and the approaches which might be productive in combating and addressing the issue (Callinan, 2002) need to be at the forefront of removal and intervention procedures. It is important therefore, to distinguish between malicious graffiti as random vandalism and a crime against public/private property versus graffiti which although, is an act of vandalism and crime, also has a dark agenda of communicating division and hate towards other ethnicities, religions, cultures, genders, sexualities, registering as a hate incident and/or crime. The effect of this graffiti on the community is that it contributes to 'an ambience in which expressions of hate are considered an unremarkable aspect of the social environment' (Wilson, 2014). Tolerance of, and lack of action can transmit an implied message of silent acceptance, and implicit agreement within the local area. It is such graffiti or 'hate visuals' which are the focus of the StreetSnap project.

Hate crime is defined as "any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity" (Anti Racist Wales Action Plan, p.113). According to Home Office figures for hate crime in England and Wales, 2021 to 2022, there has been a significant rise in recorded hate crime (Hate Crime in England and Wales, 2021-2022):

- as in previous years, most hate crimes were racially motivated, accounting for over two-thirds of all such offences (70%; 109,843 offences); racially motivated hate crimes increased by 19% between year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022.
- religious hate crimes increased by 37% (to 8,730 offences), up from 6,383 in the previous year; this was the highest number of religious hate crimes recorded since the time series began in year ending March 2012.
- sexual orientation hate crimes increased by 41% (to 26,152), disability hate crimes by 43% (to 14,242) and transgender identity hate crimes by 56% (to 4,355); these percentage increases were much higher than seen in recent years.

This rise illustrates the current prevalence of hate and division in our communities despite the continued underreporting. One way this is demonstrated is through ongoing instances of graffiti and stickering carrying messages of hate, harmful ideologies, and the denigration of protected groups, across our local areas (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Examples of instances of visual representations of hate

Note. Examples of hateful graffiti with messaging in the form of spray painting, leafleting and stickering, gathered from the neighbouring area of Swansea in 2021 (Report forthcoming, 2023).

As part of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) (2015) the pioneering Anti Racist Wales Action Plan (2022) has sought to take action with the goal that "physical and on-line hate crime is eliminated", "emphasising the message that racially motivated intolerance, hatred and divisive actions and behaviours have no place in Wales", making explicit that "reporting and tackling hate crime should not be solely left to the victims" (Anti-racist Wales Action Plan p.113, p.114). In response to this, through Community Cohesion Programme Workplans, Local Community Safety Partnerships across Wales work to reduce hate crime and the impact of such incidents on local communities (Community Cohesion Programme Workplan, 2022).

For communities to be resilient to hate, the environment in which people reside must have a sense of safety, security and be free from crime. Research has shown that the prevalence of hateful graffiti in the community acts to heighten perceptions of insecurity, fear, and threat (Squires, 2008; Taylor, Cordin and Njiru, 2010). Perceptions of safety influence the way in which people behave and their use of public spaces, delineating limits to places and spaces of interaction and inclusion (OPN Survey ONS.) The UK Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan (2023) has set out its approach to eradicating anti-social behaviour, with its aim of enabling the right of all to feel

safe and proud of their local communities. For example, over the last 18 months, through Home Office grant funding, the Safer Streets Project in the borough has addressed perceptions of safety through the commission of art projects to improve spaces and their local perception. Specifically, in the Porthcawl area, an area unused particularly by women and girls due to a perceived lack of safety, was improved with the installation of CCTV and commissioned art works which also covered over existing graffiti, making a significant improvement to the area. Similar street art projects have also been installed in Maesteg, Tondu and Bridgend as well as in the neighbouring borough of Swansea. From a policing perspective, through Home Office funding the StreetSafe Service is currently being piloted in the area which enables the anonymous reporting of public spaces where there is a perception of lack of safety due to environmental or behavioural issues.

Understanding Hate in our Communities

Community Exposure

Despite being primarily visual there is almost always a clear (often ideologically driven) message carried in hate graffiti and stickering. It shouts loudest to its target audience but reverberates within the community conveying powerful messages about who belongs (the in-group) and who does not (the out-group). Whether created with intent or simply copied by the naïve in possession of paint but no possession of knowledge, its effect is the same. Due to the prosaic nature of hate graffiti in the community there is often an everyday 'blindness' to its presence (Wilson, 2014). However, this 'blindness' reinforces, naturalises, and perpetuates learned hateful attitudes and behaviour, shaping, and problematizing the identity of selves and others, and dividing communities. This depiction of hate exists in juxtaposition to, the richness and beauty of Bridgend local communities including the culture and heritage of the people who reside there. The image below, captured in the Nantymoel area by the Partnerships Manager for Bridgend County Borough Council during her working day is a powerful expression of this juxtaposition.

Figure 2

Skate Park, Aber Road, Nantymoel.

Note. Image captured by Partnerships Manager for Bridgend County Borough Council

Individuals and groups who suffer marginalisation and discrimination in society are the victims of visual representations of hate in our communities. Often unknown to the perpetrator, they are targeted because of perceptions of difference or group affiliation based on perceived race and ethnicity, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, transgender identity, or migrant status. Such acts of symbolic violence are particularly damaging because they target the victims at the fundamental level of identity, affecting confidence and self-worth (Garland, 2010). Like all hate crime, it is a mechanism for power and oppression, designed to scare and intimidate, and aims to maintain the 'subordinate' identity of the victims and uphold the real or imagined hegemony of the perpetrator's group (Perry, 2001).

To address hate at the level of prevention, a more stratified approach is required which involves paying attention to hate graffiti in a different way. In addition to conceptualising these images as a source of data, there is a need to also shift attention to include the impact of hateful graffiti on the shaping of subjectivity, and understandings of self, other and othering processes. Currently, what is being 'taught' and 'learned' about selves and others on the walls and street furniture of our

communities runs counter to current anti-hate and community cohesion efforts. Highlighting difference and lack of belonging fosters feelings of anger and alienation and can drive individuals to seek belonging and positive self-esteem through other groups and communities, making them vulnerable to harmful and extremist ideologies (Watkin & Conway, 2022, Nouri, Lorenzo-Dus & Watkin, 2021).

Extremism

Unlike terrorism, extremism can present as a pervasive but nonviolent presence in the community. In addition to the physical violence utilised by extremist fractions to assert their power, such groups also make use of less aggressive forms of communication and publicity. The existing academic scholarship focusing on extremist imagery and narratives demonstrates that when extremist groups communicate outside of their dedicated ecosystems (e.g., private meetings, encrypted communications) these communities disguise their politics by coding and cloaking their terminology and symbols (Richardson, 2020). Thereby, the use of symbols, codes and euphemisms have become a defining feature of extremist communication. These codes and symbols are utilised through a broad range of modes, from the more passive but tribal (Vigso, 2016) approach such as stickers and posters, to the more aggressive tactic of using spray graffiti. Symbols and iconography are used as tools to effectively communicate a message to the people within the group (in-group) and everyone else (out-group). Depending on who the visual communication is intended for, different tactics are employed to convey ideas and beliefs (Nouri, Lorenzo-Dus & Watkin, 2021).

Better understanding of this form of communication is necessary in order that efficacious responses, solutions, and interventions can be put in place. There is a need to identify frequency, trends, patterns and potential 'hotspots' in the local area which can act as a form of data/intelligence. However, within current systems of dealing with hateful graffiti this vital information is disjointed, sparce or absent altogether. There is a need for the mandatory, systematic, ongoing reporting, recording, and monitoring of hate visuals collected as data by frontline staff exposed to them in their everyday working lives.

Radicalisation

The holding of extremist views and subscription to extremist ideologies is not considered a criminal offence. Persistent visual representations of such hatred, however, can normalise extremist perspectives in our society (Lee, 2020). Contextual safeguarding, as an approach, understands and responds to the harms that young people may experience beyond their home and family environment (Contextual Safeguarding Partnership). It brings to the fore the wider environment in which physical or social harm occurs to reduce risk. The Contextual Safeguarding Framework set out by The University of Bedfordshire has highlighted the need for those who have influence over extra familial contexts to recognise that assessment of and intervention in these spaces is critical to safeguarding. As a crucial part of their safeguarding remit, local authorities and Community Safety Partnerships then need to consider the wider impact of visual representations of hate in our communities and how these relate to issues of safeguarding around

identity, recruitment of the vulnerable for radicalisation and into extremism and their duties under PREVENT. A training package and app could reduce the likelihood of an individual being exposed to hateful visuals and recruitment processes at the initial stages of involvement. Used as a live communication tool across the Community Safety Partnership, police could more swiftly receive real-time data from partners regarding hate in the community and intervene. This could have considerable impact on the number of radicalised individuals across Wales as well as reduce harm to identities, community conflict and improve perceptions of safety. Beyond these societal impacts, resources and cost will be reduced in this area of national importance.

The Current Situation

The Police, Bridgend County Borough Council, and its Housing Partner [Valleys2Coast](#) currently have separate systems of reporting and logging hate visuals, joined in an ad hock way via the Community Safety Partnership Team. Due to existing gaps in this system, a comprehensive understanding of the extent of the issue across the County Borough of Bridgend and the Community Safety Partnership is not possible. Public reporting of graffiti in the Bridgend County Borough is through the Cleaner Streets Team, who acknowledge the harmful impact that graffiti has on perceptions of safety. They are responsible for removing graffiti on all Council owned property and when indemnified against damage, can assist in removal at the request of private landlords. Valleys2Coast are also responsible for vast land usage in the Bridgend County Borough and have their own removal systems for graffiti on their property. However, currently there are three identifiable problems which hamper the Community Safety Partnership's efforts to address hateful graffiti in the community:

Problem 1: Lack of a mandated coherent system to report, monitor and remove hateful visuals/graffiti.

As outlined above, to reduce/prevent hate and extremism and build cohesive, resilient communities, a vital inroad is to identify and monitor areas, particularly where the risk is high. At present there is no existing tool either available within the Police or externally to record, monitor, and utilise data related to hate visuals in the community either nationally or globally. Despite this lack of coordination, it is part of the mandate of local Cohesion Officers, at an operational level to break down hateful graffiti into 3 categories (Community Cohesion Programme Workplan, 2022):

1. Recognisable hateful/racist symbols/dialogue sprayed/drawn onto walls benches, underpass etc.
2. Lesser-known symbols/dialogue sprayed/drawn at frequently used areas, i.e., bus stops, taxi ranks, open spaces, Stickers of lesser-known symbols with links/QR codes to hateful websites/groups – an infiltration between online communities and real-life communities.
3. Threats made, the targeting of specific groups.

This categorisation is deemed of utmost importance to the counter-hate and counter terror/extremism agenda, yet there are no achievable ways for this to be recorded and no training is in place for Coordinators to recognise the images for classification.

Additionally, system inefficiencies mean that despite a mandate for street cleaners to remove hateful graffiti within 24 hours this can take up to 2-4 days, and it is often removed before capture. Losing the image in this way means that vital data and intelligence is missed, and potential combat interventions are unrealised.

Problem 2: Lack of Buy-in

When addressing the issue of hateful graffiti, Community Safety Partnerships across Wales have suffered from a lack of buy-in from front line practitioners such as Street Cleaning Teams and Housing Officers. Again, this is due to inadequate provision for training and challenging processes for reporting hate visuals (further reinforced by conversations during Nouri's 2022 training).

Problem 3: Lack of Knowledge

Contributing to the current picture of ad hock reporting on the ground in the Bridgend County Borough is a lack of knowledge of what hate visuals look like, if they should be reported, where and how. Significantly, there is a lack of knowledge around the importance of reporting hateful graffiti connected to its impact in relation to community cohesion and counterterrorism and extremism efforts.

The extent of hate graffiti in the County Borough of Bridgend is at present unknowable. While there are no existing empirical data relating to the prevalence of hate visuals for Bridgend, a recent project undertaken in the neighbouring area of Swansea has provided a concrete illustration of both the issue and the solution to its address. Through collecting and collating data such as image, content, themes, forms and location a systematic means of monitoring and analysis emerged (see over and below Key).
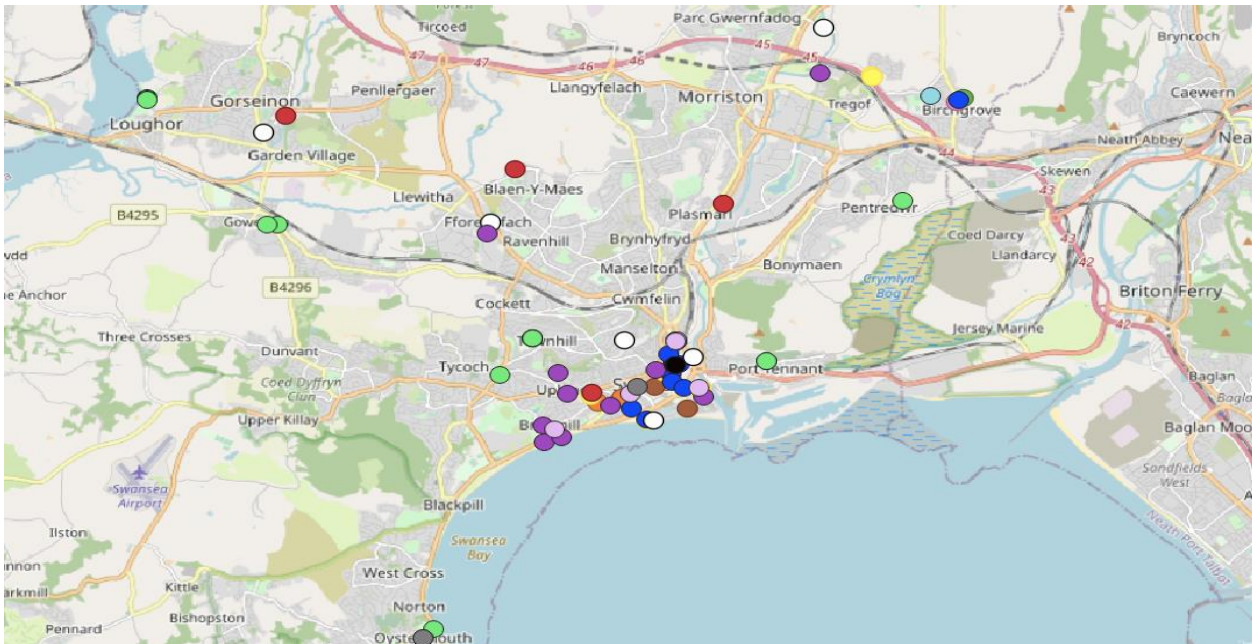
Figure 3

Map from forthcoming Swansea Graffiti Report, 2023
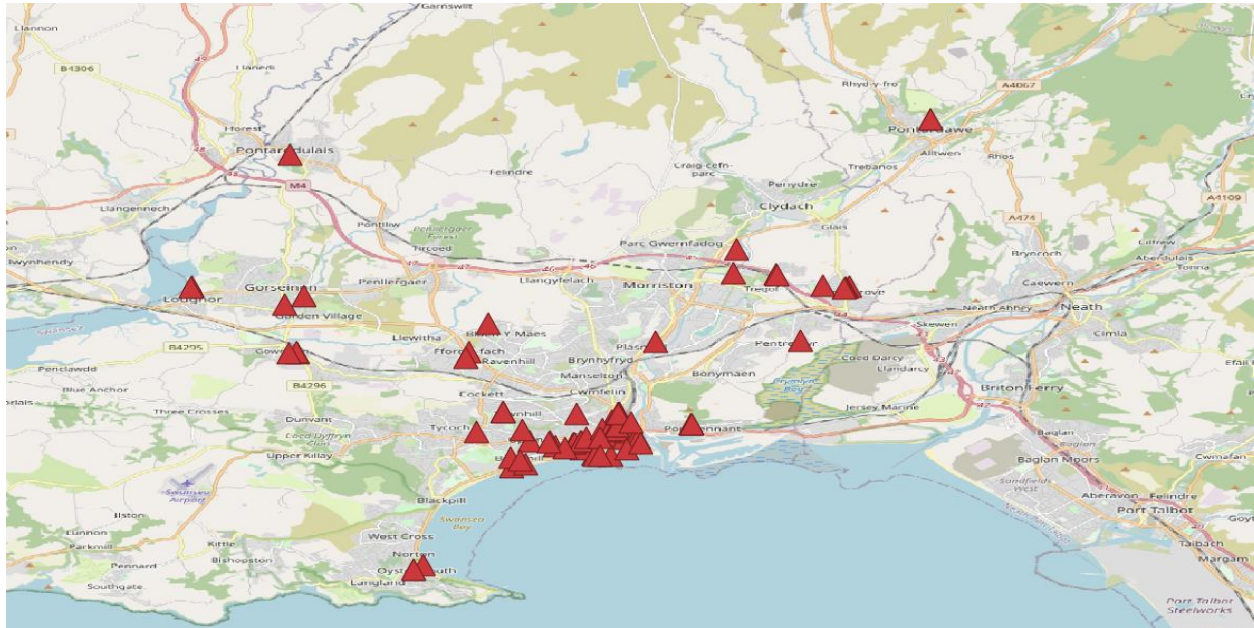
Note. Red triangles map the geo location of instances of graffiti

Figure 4

Map from forthcoming Swansea Graffiti Report, 2023

Note. Coloured circles represent the content type of each instance of graffiti [1]

Transformative change via an Innovative Technological Solution: StreetSnap

Solutions to Problem 1: A mandatory coherent system for reporting/capturing, monitoring and removal.

The development of the StreetSnap app is the result of longstanding and on-going collaboration. The application will be need and functionality driven and built from scratch for cost effectiveness. The integrated application will have many features but primarily will incorporate several key bespoke components including:

Table 1

StreetSnap Features and Functions

User Category	Functionality
All Users (e.g., street cleaning staff, housing officers, PCSO's, etc)	Enable Users to upload photographs to a live database of graffiti/stickering incidents. Through this upload precise location and time will be automatically recorded and users will be able to add additional information.
Administrators (e.g., high level Administrative Staff, Senior Managers – with varying degrees of access)	• Access database of photographs with the ability to assess information on content type, etc. • Ability to populate reports based on location, reporter, content type, data/time • Ability to map incidents across boroughs.

This formalised process will ensure all front-line practitioners are reporting on hate visuals and this will be collated and analysed through features on the application. This will result in a simplified, resource-efficient, and time-saving reporting and response for all to follow:

Figure 5

StreetSnap Workflow System

Visual up-loaded to App → Image Captured → Image automatically reported to relevant departments and partners → Visual Removed within 24 hours → Data utilised for Prevention Follow up

Solution to Problem 2: Cultivating Staff Buy-In

In recognition of the integral role of staff buy in, the StreetSnap Project adopts an empowering and participatory approach to development, working with a variety of Bridgend County Borough

Council employees and Partnership organisations to understand their daily work needs, and develop appropriate, responsive, user-friendly technologies that will not only support them in their work but also the communities they serve more effectively. It is envisaged that more staff awareness and input, will increase relevance, cultivating a sense of ownership towards the StreetSnap App which will facilitate their buy in and up-take. Consistent and ongoing engagement and support will be provided to staff to maximise utilisation. This early engagement will facilitate a more integrated process of knowledge exchange and transfer.

Solution to Problem 3: Knowledge Exchange

Central to the apps' development is knowledge exchange. Before its pilot in Bridgend, staff training will be provided around the functionality of StreetSnap, and the vital importance of reporting, capturing, monitoring and removal processes in and beyond their work setting. Whilst the processes of reporting and removing hate visuals on the streets, can address the issue of graffiti in a practical sense, the broader issue of the presence of the graffiti in the first place and what it may indicate about tension and cohesion, or lack of, in the area is lost. Systematic capture of hate visuals for monitoring and academic analysis purposes is vital. Following the pilot, focus groups will be conducted with users to address and access ease of use and functionality. This process will inform future development and commercial role out of the app.

StreetSnap: Benefits and Impact

The Smart Partnership Pilot Project puts Bridgend County Borough Council and its partners at the forefront of directly addressing the mission set out by the Welsh Government Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. The StreetSnap app project overlaps with the three key objectives outlined by the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership 2023 and several National priorities across England and Wales (see below) and benefits also fit well into the Well-Being of Future Generations Wales Act in terms of: a resilient Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities and a globally responsible Wales. Leading the way in applying an evidence based, academically informed solution, through the Smart Partnership, Bridgend County Borough Council is already being used as an exemplar in the Anti-Racist Wales Crime and Justice Implementation Plan (2022). Similarly, the project has also been recognised as 'good practice' by the CONTEST Cymru board. Regarding counter-extremism efforts more broadly, this work is also strategically aligned to the: UK CONTEST Strategy, Counter-Extremism Strategy, UK Government Hate Crime Action Plan, Commission for Counter Extremism & Academic-Practitioner Network (APCEN) and ACT: Action Counters Terrorism – UK Policing putting Wales at the forefront of combatting hateful visual content across the UK. Data gathered by the app will provide increased awareness and more complete understanding of key issues across professionals and local areas; evidence-based interventions can be implemented, and their success efficiently tracked; and the lives of people can be Safeguarded by reducing community tensions and the possibility of being drawn into extremism/terrorism.   Data gathered by StreetSnap can be used as follows:

Table 2

Bridgend CSP Objectives - Objective 1: Training and Capacity Building

	StreetSnap data use:	**Benefits for CSP:**
Training and Capacity building for staff and key partners	Determine current issues and trends in the community	Delivery of more specialised internal/external training
Increase engagement with vulnerable communities	Help determine most vulnerable communities and the issues faced	Increase engagement with diverse communities and establish safety measures. Increase engagement with those vulnerable to radicalisation
Build Capacity within groups supporting minority communities	Offer understanding of specific issues affecting vulnerable communities.	Groups supporting minority communities will be better able to signpost for specialized support. Help foster good relationships between support groups and the community.

Table 3

Bridgend CSP Objectives - Objective 2: Tension Monitoring and Mitigation

	StreetSnap data use:	**Benefits for CSP:**
Map emerging and ongoing trends. Measure threats and impacts to community safety /Cohesion.	Gather and record additional layers of intelligence around current and potential community tensions.	More engagement with minority groups experiencing community tensions to facilitate reduction. Facilitate the sharing of intelligence around risk with Welsh Government and other key agencies.
Strengthen Partnership working and establish tension monitoring networks	Determine joint, regional or local responses to intelligence	Share intelligence of issues with potential to affect neighbouring local areas
Provide consistent tension monitoring reports to Welsh Government	Identify and mitigate issues before escalation. Provide a broader picture of local landscapes.	Facilitate the provision of regular and accurate tension monitoring reports to Welsh Government.

Table 4

Bridgend CSP Objectives - Objective 3: Prevention of Hate and Extremism

	StreetSnap data use:	Benefits for CSP:
Identify groups vulnerable to radicalization/extremism. Identify vulnerable groups targeted by hate	Utilise additional layers of intelligence to identify and confirm susceptible groups/individuals to radicalization.	Work efficiently with the Police, safeguarding and counterterrorism leads. Engage and uphold responsibility for victim safety in their locale.
Promotion of counter narratives and anti-hate messages, tackling misinformation.	Identify misinformation; ideologically and geographically when it occurs	Create campaigns and promotions of anti-hate narratives
Sharing Information at local and regional CONTEST/Prevent Boards	Intelligence and Information sharing	Share tangible date that potentially affects neighbouring Local Authorities.

Time Management, Resources and Costs

Before the Smart Partnership Bridgend County Borough Council had neither the staff, resources nor infrastructure to build and maintain an individual reporting mechanism that is digital and cross departmental/regional. Now, the simple action of frontline staff capturing an image through StreetSnap can:

- Facilitate appropriate and efficient allocation of resources.
- Reduce the duplication of work across departments (and Partners).
- Ensure the 24-hour target of removal can be met through more timely and systematic reporting and capture of graffiti/stickering/hate visual incidents, helping to mitigate community tensions and the infiltration and impact of hate and harmful ideologies.
- Affect Staff morale due to the new ability to track the direct impact of evidence-based interventions, increasing job satisfaction and staff retention rates.

Academic Scholarship

Despite their prevalence in the public domain, always seeking audience, and viewed on masse (Tellidis and Glomm, 2019), somewhat surprisingly, there is a dearth of academic engagement with hateful graffiti/images per se. The 'invisible harms' to individuals, groups and communities via this medium is thus undertheorized (Chakraborti and Garland, 2001). Having a systematic means of capturing images for academic analysis, through the lens of varying disciplines and theoretical perspectives afford insights, knowledge and understanding beyond a catalogue of

images. Understanding hate graffiti as a readily available data source and tool of analysis provides a unique temporal vista into local contexts. Charting and categorising instances of hate graffiti both ideologically and geographically and utilizing them as a form of intelligence would mean that hateful images could be interrogated. Centring context to include the specificity of space, place and culture/subculture enables enquiry into *why that, in this way, now*? (Lynn and Lea, 2005, p. 281). Understanding the significance of where, when and by whom is as important as making sense of the content (Lynn and Lea, 2005.) Such analysis would be invaluable in terms of what it might tell us about local dynamics and the penetration and influence of harmful organized outside groups, perceptions, and issues of division in local communities, how these may be affecting community cohesion and how best to counter and support through policy and practice. Using this data or 'intelligence' academic scholarship could, for example:

- Consider and monitor the ways in which Government Policy affects the presence of graffiti as hate crime.
- Establish which minority groups are being targeted through instances of hate graffiti and connect patterns to the wider National and Global context of potential influence.
- Provide insights into organisational processes and affiliations to other groups and activities, nationally and internationally.
- Interrogate and deconstruct Policy, the discourse of Political Leaders and media systems to consider the ways in which hate, racism and extremism might be reflected in everyday discourse and institutional practices, and its connection to graffiti and exacerbating tensions.

Establishing and facilitating the growth of a sound knowledge base in the area of extremist graffiti and visual hate crime is pivotal if we are to counter it and its effects in the community and work towards a "Wales where everyone is respected and valued and where we can enjoy and celebrate our differences" (Anti Racist Wales Action Plan. P.114). The use of StreetSnap can be instrumental in amplifying community safety, building local pride, aiding early intervention and prevention, and improving data reporting and accountability for action (Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan, 2023) .

Summary

The presence of hate visuals in the community adversely affects perceptions of safety and community cohesion. With the current changing social, cultural and economic landscape at both local and National levels related to issues of immigration, asylum seekers, rising costs of living, and the associated tensions that such changes are evidenced to bring about in the community, there is increased obligation and imperative that hate visuals are identified, reported, and captured for analysis before removal with haste.

The development of a monitoring instrument to streamline processes is essential. The process needs to be formalized, systematic and mandatory. A tri-system which incorporates knowledge exchange, and a training package, alongside innovative technology provides a means of achieving this.

StreetSnap is a transformative intervention which can aid and inform Bridgend County Borough Council and the Community Safety Partnership in the following keyways:

Table 5

Summary of Benefits

Benefits:
• Streamline communication and enable the systematic and efficient reporting, capturing, analysis, monitoring and removal processes.
• Help identify areas of tension/ lacking cohesion.
• Identify and monitor ideologies, individuals, groups and areas of concern in a strategic manner.
• Identify which groups in the community are being, adversely affected by hate crime/ incidents and respond to this with efficient resource allocation, prioritising provision and support.
• Understand emerging trends and gain understanding of the broader issues.
• Monitor and mitigate tensions through engagement with communities and intelligence gathering.
• Improve contextual safeguarding and community safety.
• Knowledge exchange: participation in design, training and use of StreetSnap will be instrumental in ensuring that cohesion issues are considered in the development of strategic Equality Plans, Equality Impact Assessments and Community Safety Planning.
• Inform response strategies to PREVENT Duty Guidelines and Channel Multiagency Panel.
• Inform academic research perspectives, policy and practice in relation to extremism and hate visuals in the community.
• Enable all Partners to lead the way in directly addressing the counter-hate objectives set out within the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (2022), Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, and Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan exemplifying the Borough of Bridgend as a model of action.
• Put Wales at the Forefront of combatting hateful visuals across the UK

Next Steps

The initial focus of the project has been raising awareness and information gathering across the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership. Through this process, contacts have been made across the partnership and interest and support in the StreetSnap Pilot Project established. This has enabled the identification of key frontline staff with potential to use StreetSnap and provided insight into how best to structure and facilitate staff training and Focus Groups based on the varied staff population and their diverse educational/training needs and capacities. Following on from this, the project will proceed as follows:

Table 6

Project Plan

Month	Action
September	Invitation to 'need specific' training around app function and the importance of capturing, monitoring and removing hate visuals in the community. Training to coincide with National Hate Crime Awareness Week (3 week of October)
October/November	Role out of App for trained key frontline staff and managers.
December	'Soft Launch' at Bridgend County Borough Council Offices for Community Safety Partnership members. This will coincide with an interview with the Guardian about the StreetSnap app.
January/February	Focus groups conducted with key frontline staff users for feedback on app usage and function to inform refinement before commercial launch.
February - May	Evaluation and refinement of app for commercial launch. Dissemination of evaluation.

Get in Touch.

If you would like further information regarding the StreetSnap Pilot project we would like to hear from you.

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