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To: Crime, Home Affairs, Retail and Journalists

COST OF RETAIL CRIME FALLS AS VIOLENCE TOWARDS STAFF SOARS

British Retail Consortium's eleventh annual Retail Crime Survey, sponsored by ADT, reveals that the total losses from retail crime fell by £700 million to £1 billion, down from £1.7 billion in 2002.

This major achievement was brought about by retailers increasing the amount spent on crime prevention to £960 million, a rise of 78% from 2002 and the largest ever annual investment. In the last three years retailers have spent £2.11 billion on crime prevention in their stores.

The full impact of crime and crime prevention amounted to £1.96 billion in 2003, equating to a cost of approximately £79 per household. The total cost of crime to retail sector showed a 13% fall costing retailers £1.96 billion in 2003 compared to £2.25 billion in 2002.

Whilst the costs of retail crime have fallen, the survey shows violence against staff rose by 17% with verbal abuse of staff more than doubling by 109% and threats to staff soaring by 161%.

Kevin Hawkins, BRC Director General, said: "The visible cost of crime showed a considerable and welcome fall. These figures show how determined retailers have been to tackle this serious problem. Massive investment of resources over recent years has led to significant success, as has their support for initiatives such as Action Against Business Crime.

"However, the hidden cost of crime – the emotional and business viability impact of violence towards staff – has shown a serious and worrying rise. Retail crime is not victimless. Reducing these figures and the terrible unseen cost of this type of crime is a priority for the industry.

"The way forward is to ensure the Government and police take retail crime seriously and for the industry to continue play a substantial role in a wide range of initiatives to fight crime and make our communities safer and better places."

ENDS

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