



NW NEWS

West Kent

Your co-ordinator is:.....

Tel No. ....

# Watchout

The Voice of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association

Issue 46

*"Security through awareness"*

Spring 2018

## Farewell Message from Chief Inspector Dave Pate . . .

In the Spring of 1988, 'Rick Astley' had a number one hit, 'Maggie' was Prime Minister and people still talked to each other at the dinner table as mobile devices were just a pipe dream of the big phone companies.

As I walked in to Tunbridge Wells Police Station on day one as a 'probationer constable' I could not have known what wonderful, exciting, demanding, amusing and tragic experiences were ahead of me for the next 30 years.

In 1989, within 2 hours of its detonation, I was standing in the centre of the devastation caused by an IRA bomb at the Royal Marine Barracks, Deal. As I stared at the carnage caused to man (in fact they

were boy musicians) by man I wondered what life and death was about.

Despite the wickedness, I realised great community spirit shines through. A 'wise owl' of a colleague told me to pay attention to those 'Neighbourhood Watch Folk' . . . he said they held a wealth of information and little acorns grow in to big trees. I have always applied that use of intelligence, no matter how small or apparently insignificant, to my police work.

When I took command of policing in Tunbridge Wells in 2013 and then in addition Tonbridge and Malling in 2016, I was able to bring together the partnerships made over the years to tackle head on some of the most serious crimes in our

community. Local policing is a vital ingredient for success. A named officer for every resident and the creation of a town centre team for Tunbridge Wells in 2014 meant despite the 'thin blue line' my staff were identifiable to their neighbourhood.

I enjoyed a close working relationship with colleagues in West Kent NhW and together we have kept West Kent safe. I am immensely proud of the team work to combat criminals.

The achievements of our partnership are too great to list here but I urge readers to measure the 'success' by the absence of volumes of crimes. Having worked in other parts of Kent and across England and Wales, I want to reassure you that we experience low levels of crime and have great community cohesion.

West Kent NhW is at the heart of this and as I leave the police at the end of May this year my final words are saved for them – community members who give up their time for free to look out for each other.

Thank you. It has been a real honour and pleasure to have worked with you and be in charge of local policing here in West Kent for the last 4 and a half years.

## Police donation to community after fire near Snodland

A special community day planned for residents near Snodland is set to benefit from a donation from the Kent Police Property Fund.

A cheque for £500 was presented to the Holborough Lakes Residents' Society (HLRS) and follows a major fire in September 2017, which caused substantial damage to a number of homes.

The Kent Police Property Fund distributes money from the sale of unclaimed lost property or items seized during police operations.

Money raised is distributed twice a year, to local groups which provide a service to communities in Kent. Community Support Officer Kim Lidbury presented the cheque to HLRS member Robin Dod, on 24 February 2018.

PCSO Lidbury said: "Many families had to leave their homes following the fire, which caused considerable damage to a number of flats in the Holborough Lakes area. I'm absolutely delighted we are now

able to contribute to an event, which will hopefully help bring residents together and bring some enjoyment to families who have endured some very difficult challenges over the past year."

*By Andy Saunders, Press Officer.*



*Pcso Kim Lidbury presents a cheque to Robin Dod.*

## British Transport Police

Text 61016 to report non-emergency incidents on trains or the tube. Dial 0800 405040 to give more information. A 999 call is guaranteed a quick response. For Crimestoppers dial 0800 555 111.

## Make a note

*When contacting the Police in West Kent*

**Emergency only 999**

**Kent Police 101**

Is for reporting non-urgent crime, suspicious incidents or to contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team. Calls cost just 16p from landlines or mobiles.

# Don't Be Taken In By These Scams

## SCAM 1.

### The Fake Tax Grab . . .

#### How it works.

One of the most pernicious recent cons involves criminals calling people to say that they are getting in touch on behalf of HM Revenue & Customs. The fraudsters claim you owe HMRC thousands of pounds in taxes and ask for your bank details.

One 85 year old woman was threatened with arrest if this supposed debt was not settled. The call was made even more frightening and convincing by the fact that conman knew the victim's address. Luckily, the woman in question decided to contact her accountant rather than handing over any information.

On other occasions, fraudsters may claim that you have been sent a number of reminder letters, which you have apparently ignored.

#### Protect yourself.

HMRC says that it will never contact a taxpayer by phone to obtain unpaid taxes. If someone contacts you claiming to be from an official body (or a bank), tell them you will call them back. Use the number on the official website or an official correspondence, such as a tax reminder.

Make a note of the call details and number if possible (dialling 1471 can sometimes give you the last caller's details if they have not withheld their number) and report any suspicious activities to the Police's Action Fraud Service, tel: 0300 123 2014, or e-mail: [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).

## SCAM 2.

### Catalogue and Brochure Scams . . .

#### How it works.

Scammers send out literature selling a variety of different products including food, pills, beauty products, jewellery, clothes and items for the home and garden.

They guarantee prizes to those who order but they never send the prize. Instead they send out more dazzling promises to get more orders.

These scams often involve the victim receiving phone calls to confirm the 'win' or being told to look out for 'important' letters arriving. These scams are known to be operating out of the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Switzerland as well as other countries.

#### Protect yourself.

If you wish to buy an item from a mail order catalogue (they are not all scams), check them out first to see if they are genuine.

Contacting Action Fraud may well warn you if this catalogue is involved with these scams.

## SCAM 3.

### Solar Panels . . .

#### How it works.

Kent Police have been advised of a scam where cold callers are attending addresses and advising occupants that the solar panel inverter needs replacing as it is a fire risk.

They try to get the occupants to pay £3,000 - £4,000 for a replacement, adding that their home insurance will be invalid if they do not.

They appear to have details of previous customers of My Planet, who are no longer trading and are using this angle to get your custom.

#### Protect yourself.

Never agree to any work when someone calls at your door uninvited. Check first with the company that installed your solar panels and if you are concerned, ask them to visit to check your inverter is still working well. Usually a 5-year guarantee is given by a company when they install solar panels, so it is worth checking if this is still valid.

Have a word with your own insurance company to see if your solar panels are covered under your house policy.

## SCAM 4.

### BT Scam . . .

#### How it works.

British Telecom is warning that fraudsters are once again sending out phishing e-mails to BT customers asking them to update their billing information.

There are also reports of fraudsters threatening to disconnect customers after calling them about alleged unpaid bills.

BT is reminding customers that they NEVER send e-mails to customers in which they ask for any sensitive information.

Anyone who receives an e-mail that looks like it has been sent by BT asking for personal details such as a password and account details, is being advised that it is likely to be a phishing e-mail.

#### Protect yourself.

Bt advises that you call them and also tell Action Fraud of any incidents.

## SCAM 5.

### The Post Accident Text Message . . .

#### How it works.

British Police have uncovered a scam in which individuals receive a text message on their mobile phone which comes from an unknown number but appears to have been written by a close relative, a son or daughter.

The message says that the sender has been involved in an accident and is now in hospital and has borrowed a mobile phone to let you know. You are asked to respond to the message urgently, then you are asked if you can pay for credit for the senders phone so that the 'accident victim' can make a voice call. However, the entire thing is of course a hoax and the criminal gets a free mobile top-up.

Criminals also use e-mails. They hack a friends e-mail account and send a message to all their contacts saying "I am abroad and have been involved in an accident, have lost all my money and passport. Can you transfer money using Western Union Credit to help me?"

#### Protect yourself.

According to Action Fraud, anyone who had really been involved in an accident would never be forced to pay for a mobile phone credit simply to talk to a relative. In fact any text message you receive from an unknown number that claims to be from someone you know should ring alarm bells. Call your relatives on their actual phone number to check if their mobile is out of action.

## SCAM 6.

### The Urgent PPI Claim . . .

#### How it works.

You get a call from a criminal who says that he or she is getting in touch on behalf of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) the regulatory body, because you are eligible to make a claim for mis-sold Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) but you must do so urgently.

The fraudster then says that an upfront fee needs to be paid before the claim can be processed. They either ask you to transfer money to a dodgy account or take your bank details and raid your own bank account.

In fact, the actual deadline for claims is 29th August 2019 and the FCA has recently run a TV awareness campaign to make sure those with genuine cases do not miss out.

#### *Protect yourself.*

Cold-calling about PPI claims is nothing new but pretending to be from the FCA certainly seems to be. The FCA would never contact individuals in this way.

Even legitimate PPI claim companies are worth avoiding as they tend to charge high fees that are often payable upfront.

If you think you have been mis-sold PPI, visit the Money Advice Service website at [moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://moneyadvice.service.org.uk) for details of how to claim compensation.

## SCAM 7.

### The Stolen Card Con . . .

#### How it works.

You get a call from someone claiming to be a police officer. They say they have found a stolen bank card that appears to be yours and ask you to confirm your account details.

You are then told to call another number, supposedly your bank's anti-fraud team, in order to prevent any losses. You are asked for information on this second call so that eventually the fraudsters have all the details they need to raid your account.

Alternatively, the fake anti-fraud team will tell you that you should move your cash to a 'safe' account. This is actually controlled by the criminals.

#### *Protect yourself.*

The police would never call suspected crime victims to ask them to confirm their bank details. If your bank card has genuinely been stolen, contact your bank on their official number, one you can obtain from its website or a recent bank statement.

## SCAM 8.

### The Too-Good-To-Be-True Investment Opportunity . . .

#### How it works.

Criminals cold-call people whom they believe have large sums of money to invest – typically those approaching retirement or current pensioners. They are taking advantage of new Government rules that allow easier access to pension savings to persuade you to invest in assets, for example foreign property or fine wine, which they promise will increase dramatically in value.

These assets either do not exist or are hugely overpriced and you lose some

or all of your cash. Recent Government figures suggest that scammers have taken £43 million pounds of pension cash in this way in the past three years.

#### *Protect yourself.*

Ministers have said they plan to ban cold-calling relating to investments in the near future, but there is no timetable yet.

Even if the practice is outlawed some criminals would no doubt continue to target people. So you should never agree to any sort of financial deal with a cold-caller.

As soon as you realise that someone is trying to persuade you to make an investment, just hang up. No genuine financial firm would market their services in this way.

## SCAM 9.

### Doorstop Caller Scam . . .

#### How it works.

Doorstop criminals call at your home unannounced, often claiming to be from a utility company such as telephone, gas, electric or water boards. Others may claim to be working in the area and have noticed a problem with your house that needs fixing.

They may offer to do work for you or say they need to check something in your home, then ask to come in and look around. In this way they may search your home for items to steal or may pressurise you to pay them cash for work you have not requested or agreed too.

Sometimes doorstop criminals pose as police officers; they may say they are

looking for a lost child or pet and need to look around your house.

These criminals are convincing and plausible and they target people in their own homes.

#### *Protect yourself.*

You can set up passwords with utility companies. Only genuine representatives of that company will know what it is. You can also keep them outside your home and call the company concerned and ask if they have sent a representative to your home. If not, do not let them in. Call 999 if they are on your property or dial 101 if it is after the event.

Genuine callers will be happy to arrange a future appointment. That way you can arrange for a friend or a family member to be present with you.

## SCAM 10.

### The Missed Call Con . . .

#### How it works.

Fraudsters call your mobile, but hang up as soon as it starts ringing. This then shows up on the phone as a missed call. Many people will call back just in case it is urgent.

In fact, the number used by the criminals incurs premium-rate charges that can be as high as £15 a call, according to the police.

These payments can be applied just for connecting the call, regardless of how long you stay on the line. In some cases you will also hear a long recorded message to keep you on the phone for as long as possible so that the charges mount up.

#### *Protect yourself.*

Never call a number back just because it called you. If a phone call is genuinely important, the caller should leave you a voicemail message.

## SCAM 11.

### Parcel Delivery Scam . . .

#### How it works.

A card is posted through the victim's door stating that a delivery service was unable to deliver a parcel and that they need to contact the service by phone. The card gives a premium rate number to call, which

usually starts with 090. This turns out to be a long recorded message and all the victim receives is a hefty phone bill.

#### *Protect yourself.*

Do not call premium rate numbers. Call your local post office or visit them to see if they have a parcel waiting for you, if yes you can collect it. If not, this maybe a scam.

# Bumblebee Police Auctions . . .

This is a money saving website that helps you to buy stolen goods. Don't worry it is not anything dodgy! In fact, it is run by police forces, although Kent Police does not use this site.

If recovered items cannot be returned to their original owners, they are put up for sale instead.

The money received is then used to support charities.

You can pick up anything from a Sat-Nav, golf clubs, perfumes to a pair of flip flops.

Basically, if someone has stolen it and it cannot be reunited with its owner, it may end up on this site.



You can bid from anywhere in the country. The auctions are run by different police forces, but not all of them offer a delivery service.

You can however collect items you buy from the police property office that sold them. The website address is [www.bumblebeeauctions.co.uk](http://www.bumblebeeauctions.co.uk).

## Filter calls on your landline

BT customers can sign up for Call Protect. It automatically diverts calls from numbers on BT's black list of nuisance callers. It allows you to create your own blacklist and choose certain calls to send straight to junk voicemail, such as International numbers, withheld numbers and unrecognised numbers.

For more info contact Call Protect.

If you are with another phone company please contact them as several of them do have the same system up and running for their customers.

Please look at the website:

[www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk).

run by National Trading Standards.

Also a usual telephone number is Action fraud **03454 040 506**.

## Congratulations to Dave Spitter.

Maidstone and District NhW held its Annual General Meeting at the Training School on Wednesday 19 November and VWLO Dave Spitter received the Maidstone & District NHW Co-ordinator's Cup from the committee.

Dave is quoted as saying, "I was surprised and delighted to receive this award and in turn I would like to thank all those involved with NhW as obviously it would not have been possible without their help.

"I have been Volunteer Watch Liaison Officer (VWLO) for just over a year now and can honestly say that I was not aware of the hard work and dedication that is shown by those involved and I feel privileged to work with you."

## Police dog helps arrest theft suspect

A suspected thief has been arrested after officers from Kent Police's dog unit became suspicious of a vehicle in Sevenoaks.

At around 10.30pm on Monday 5 March the dog unit officers, who were on a routine patrol, identified a car travelling in Hillingdon Avenue which they believed had been involved in a number of thefts in the area.

It is reported to have failed to stop when requested to do so before being found abandoned in Fairfield Close, Kemsing, 10 minutes later.

Police dog Cliff, who was travelling with his handlers, was subsequently deployed and after walking through an area of scrubland in Park Lane, located a 33 year old man from Tunbridge Wells.

This man was arrested on suspicion of theft from a motor vehicle, dangerous driving, failing to stop for police and driving with no insurance. He remains in custody as enquiries continue.

*Thanks go to Kent Police for this item.*



## Who's Who On The Executive Committee?

*Peter Rolington, Chairman*

*Peter Brown, Secretary*

*Julie Walker, Editor – Tel: 01732 771075*

*e-mail: julie.walker@kent.pnn.police.uk*

*Marguerite Bernard, Treasurer*

*John Watson, The Mallings*

*Sue Mason, Tonbridge*

*Richard Myers, Sevenoaks*

*Dave Spitter, Tunbridge Wells*

## Committee members

*Dave Spitter, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison*

*Officer, for Kent Police – Tel: 01622 604395*

*e-mail: dave.spitter@kent.pnn.police.uk*

## Other Useful Numbers

*Tonbridge & Malling Crime Reduction Unit*

*– Tel: 01732 844522*

*Tunbridge Wells Crime Reduction Unit*

*– Tel: 01892 526121*

*West Kent Special Branch – Tel: 07528 989208*

*UK Border Agency – Tel: 08435 047198*

*Kent Trading Standards – Tel: 03454 040506*

*Sevenoaks Community Safety Partnership*

*– Tel: 01732 227000*

*community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk*

*Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership*

*– Tel: 01732 844522 csp@tmbc.gov.uk*

*Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership*

*– Tel: 01892 526121*

*communitysafety@tunbridgewells.gov.uk*

If you wish to contact a member of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee, please write to them at:

**c/o: Tonbridge Police Station,  
Neighbourhood Watch Tray,  
1 Pembury Road, Tonbridge,  
Kent TN9 2HS.**

**Sign up to [www.e-watch.co.uk](http://www.e-watch.co.uk).  
You will then receive twice weekly  
news reports from Kent Police and  
other agencies. Scams are also  
mentioned to help protect you.**

**Lock all windows and doors  
securely when you go out.  
A timer switch is also a good  
idea if you are going on holiday.**

*WKNA Executive  
Committee expresses its thanks  
to the Borough Council for  
their assistance with production  
of this Newsletter*