



# Watching Brief

The Canterbury & District Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter

Registered Charity No 1078269

2018 – Issue 2 (Apr – Jun)

## Chairman's Message – David Hayward

Welcome to the latest edition of our District Association newsletter – once again compiled courtesy of our Vice Chair, Neal Fowler. As well as the usual spread of content on a range of matters you will find a summary of our recent Conference and AGM. It was pleasing to see many friends 'old and new' at this event – and the presentations seemed to be very well received. We strive each year to find topics of interest for our Conference and this year we felt we had achieved a good balance firstly of local policing update and then also a look at two important local issues relating to being on the lookout for signs of "modern day slavery" even in our own comparatively 'cosy' District, and also how we can offer lots of help to support the many students living in certain of our neighbourhoods. Whether or not you were able to attend I hope that you will consider sharing the content of this newsletter with your scheme members either by 'cutting and pasting' into your own newsletters or else just signposting them to our website. We were also pleased, as usual, to be well supported by representatives and displays from various community safety agencies: Kent Police, KCC Wardens, Crimestoppers, Speedwatch, Victim Support – and also Red Zebra, which assists with the linking up of community services to local individuals, details of their organisation / work can be found at <http://www.redzebra.org.uk/>

Whilst attendance at the Conference and AGM was pleasing – and the date chosen was fortuitous in the sense that the Saturdays both before and after were affected by snow (!) – I am still aware that many schemes were not able to be represented this year and indeed that some schemes might never have been so represented. This event is important not just for the Conference content and the essential business which needs to be conducted at the always quite short AGM but also for the opportunity just to be more aware of who we are and what we are trying to achieve together with our Community Safety Partners in building safer, stronger communities, where we accept the positive part we can all play in bringing this about. Those attending will have had the chance to complete feedback forms, which we do analyse in order to help shape future such events – but we would be especially interested also to hear via our website from any coordinators who might perhaps never have attended to see how we might 'bring you in'.

And finally – best wishes to **Geordie Laidlow**, who will be leaving us in the nearish future fully to concentrate on his new VWLO post in North Kent. We have valued his support and hope that a successor will be appointed soon.

## C&DNHWA Growth Since Last Newsletter

The Committee offers thanks to the following for support of NHW in their communities:

### New Coordinators:

Chestnut Close, Chartham – Robert Palmer  
Chaucer College U of K – Dave Mills

### Extended Schemes:

Folly Farm Gardens, Canterbury – Alex Bull

## Thin Blue Line Just Got A little Fatter

Kent Police is testing a pilot scheme which allows the public to report non urgent issues online through their website. The trial has been introduced following requests to find ways of reducing waiting times for people making non urgent reports to the police on the 101 phone number. The new facility can be used to submit reports of incidents occurring in the County or affecting residents of Kent. Specifically it can be used to report low level crimes, certain fraudulent activity, hate crime and road traffic collisions (where there have been no injuries and exchange of details between the parties didn't take place at the scene). At the end of each submission the user is given the opportunity to provide feedback on use of the system. All entries are allocated unique reference numbers and originators are sent an email to confirm receipt. Online reporting is now active and can be accessed through the police website at ([www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)).



Report  
**ONLINE**

[ENTER ONLINE CRIME AND INCIDENT REPORTING](http://www.kent.police.uk)

## Conference & AGM

Conference and AGM once again this year took place at Canterbury Academy and was well attended by both coordinators and exhibitors. Delegates' attendance was rewarded by an interesting array of speakers covering important issues that affect most, if not all, of our communities these days. The first speaker was **Chief Inspector Mark Weller**, the police commander in charge of the Canterbury and Dover area of the County. He provided details of the recent shift in police focus toward protection of vulnerable members of the community e.g. young people, students and those suffering mental disability, as it is these who so often end up affected by criminality. Even some criminals themselves could be classed as vulnerable, to addiction for example, which drives their behaviour. CI Weller explained that demand for police services across the County has continued to rise in recent times, against a backdrop of reducing budgets and resources. The Kent Constabulary now routinely takes 2400 calls from the public daily, with 830 of them requiring an emergency response of some kind. The Force now has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest 999 call rate (per 1000 capita) in the Country. Despite the pressures of service, CI Weller was complimentary of his staffs' enthusiasm and determination to improve delivery standards, even above the high levels indicated in glowing reports recently received following Home Office audit. He did, however, acknowledge that the burglary rate had risen over the past four years, some of which is believed to have been occasioned by improvements in recording procedure. Never-the-less action was being taken to tackle the issue by trialling the use of 'Smart-Water' technology, which marks goods with unique DNA indicators that make it more difficult for thieves to safely dispose of stolen goods. A trial of 'Smart-Water' has been undertaken in the Dover district and is due to be extended to the Canterbury area very soon.



The second speaker was **Dr Cheryl Mvula**, a volunteer from the Kent Group of 'Stop The Traffik', an organisation dedicated to the eradication of modern-day slavery and people trafficking in the UK. The worrying trends to which she referred on this issue are so important that they deserve their own article space, so please see elsewhere in this edition for a fuller account of the gripping presentation that had delegates shaking their heads in disgust and disbelief!

The last speakers gave a graphic account of a topic dear to the hearts of many coordinators in and around the Canterbury area – how best to tackle challenges that often arise in communities that have high levels of student population. Local coordinator from the Headcorn Drive area of St Stephen's, **Alex Bull**, led the presentation by explaining the means by which members of her scheme seek to assist students in improving their own security and living conditions, whilst at the same time reducing the possibly negative impact that they can have on other local residents. The essence of her message was 'reciprocity' – help them and they will return the favour to the communities in which they, for the time being, reside. With a student population accounting for 70% of residents in her area, she explained that many were youngsters that experienced independent living for the first time in their lives whilst attending university – and some found that challenging! Every-day issues of routine domestic organisation, such as putting the bins out on time to avoid overflows and resultant pest invasions, were skills that had to be learnt, either the hard way or from a friendly neighbour. The NHW scheme's 'Links' persons visit all student households in September of each year to introduce themselves and provide a simple booklet of information to quickly assist newcomers 'find their feet'. The process is aided by Student Community Champions, volunteer students who donate some of their free time to help address local issues affecting student households. In addition NHW members work closely with Suzanne Ridley from the University's Student Union and Sarah Osborn from Canterbury City Council's Student Support Office, both of whom assisted with the presentation.



The conference concluded with announcement of this year's recipient of the David Turner Award, coordinator of Whitstable's Dove Close scheme, **Michele Coppard**. Unfortunately a work commitment prevented Michele from accepting the Award in person at Conference. It was, however, graciously received on her behalf by Michele's deputy Katrina Whitbread. More detail of Michele's work and award will appear in the next Watching Brief edition.

Conference was followed by the AGM, during which the full committee stepped down prior to being formally re-elected for another year. Also elected was Alex Bull, who had been a co-opted member of Committee during the past 12 months. The Association's annual report and accounts were presented and accepted by the meeting, as was an amendment to the constitution which now reflects changes of policy necessary to comply with the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulations. A copy of the revised constitution and the Annual Trustees' Report are available to view on the Canterbury & District Neighbourhood Watch Association website, [www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/index.html](http://www.ucanpreventcrime.co.uk/NHW/index.html)

## Modern Day Slavery

There was a time, not so very many years back, when most of us would have believed that slavery was something that had long since been consigned to the dark, disgusting annals of history. But, as **Dr Cheryl Mvula MBE** explained to stunned delegates at conference, here we are, well into the 21 century, still having to confront this heinous crime – not in some far off land of the third world, but here on our own door steps, in Britain. The chilling facts of Modern Slavery, as it has become known, are horrendous. It is an international crime that affects an incredible 40 million people around the world, and amazingly as many as 13,000 here in the UK. Children are especially vulnerable, with one child being trafficked into slavery every 30 seconds around the globe. Vulnerability aids its existence, and it thrives right under our noses because most of us are completely unaware of the signs that indicate its presence. Dr Mvula and her colleagues at the Kent group of ‘**Stop The Traffik**’ work tirelessly with professional and community groups to raise awareness of the subject and provide advice as to how we can all play our part in reporting suspected victims to the authorities. In 2015 there were 3,266 potential victims identified and referred to the National Crime Agency in this country. In Kent, 260 individuals were rescued from slavery, 21 were found in the Canterbury area. Just take a look at this undercover report, courtesy of Al Jazeera, if you doubt it’s happening where we live (the section from 31 minutes onwards) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKoeUxvijRA> Modern Slavery takes a number of forms including sexual exploitation and forced labour. Often the victim is subjected to mental / physical abuse, or the threat of it, and compelled to work long hours for little or no pay. Often these ‘employers’ covertly control every aspect of their victims’ lives, accommodation, sustenance, even their liberty. The horrifying reality is that slaves in the modern environment are rarely enchained, and may not even be hidden away in some backroom of a workplace. Instead they are so often ‘hidden’ in full view, working in commonly frequented establishments and providing services that many normal people regularly use: car washes, restaurants, nail bars to name a few examples. Many others are less obvious to the general population: brothels, small sweat-shop factories, construction sites or agricultural establishments, such as fruit farms, where temporary accommodation may also be provided to ‘house’ the workers. The work undertaken by many enslaved individuals is low paid. If a service is being offered for ridiculously low sums it could well be being performed by a victim of slavery. Victims can often be identified by tell-tale signs, i.e. where they:

- Show signs of injury, abuse and malnourishment;
- Look unkempt, have poor hygiene and are often in the same clothing;
- Are under the control and influence of others;
- Live in cramped, dirty, overcrowded accommodation;
- Have no access or control of their passport or identity documents;
- Appear scared, avoids eye contact, and seems untrusting;
- Are collected very early and/or returned late at night on a regular basis;
- Have inappropriate clothing / equipment for the work they are performing;
- Are isolated from family and /or the local community.

Highly organised criminal gangs make fortunes out of Modern Slavery and ruin countless thousands of innocent lives in the process. Reporting suspicious activity is the only real means by which the public can assist in thwarting them. Every piece of information given to the authorities, no matter how seemingly obscure, could provide the vital link needed to ‘complete a picture’ and allow action to be taken to free victims from a fate that is often worse than death itself. Concerns can be raised through various means including the **Modern Slavery Helpline 0800 0121 700** or the website at [www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org) If someone is believed to be in imminent danger the police should be called without delay by phoning 999. The campaign shares some useful posters that Neighbourhood Watch groups can also use to raise awareness of this important issue in their own communities. To learn more about the campaign and to access the posters and leaflets on the issue go to <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/get-involved/our-campaigns/national-campaigns/modern-slavery/>



## News For Drivers

**School Parking Crack-Down:** Between September 2017 and the end of January 2018 Canterbury City Council (CCC) enforcement officers have issued 130 fines to motorists that have parked illegally on restricted areas near school gates. And enforcement continues with different schools being monitored every morning and evening. On 21 February alone seven penalty charge notices were issued in the space of 30 minutes at St Stephen’s School, Hales Drive, including one to a vehicle parked fully on the pavement. The crackdown, called Operation Safety Net, was started following receipt of many complaints about thoughtless drivers endangering children through inconsiderate, dangerous parking near school entrances. CCC says that enforcement will continue.

**Digital Driving Licences:** A prototype digital driving licence, for use on smart phones and Apple Wallets, was tested last year in the UK. Now, from April 2018 they will be available for full use here as they have been in the USA for some considerable period. For the time being the digital licence will be used to support the existing photocard, rather than replace it. But it is seen as a major step forward by those that no longer see the need to carry a wallet now that phones can be used for many routine daily tasks.



**No MOT Needed For Classic Cars:** Cars over 40 years of age, i.e. registered before 1977, will not need to be MOT'd from May this year. It's thought that people who own these cars tend to be enthusiasts, and therefore maintain their vehicles well enough not to require road worthiness testing. But drivers of these classic cars will still be legally obligated to keep their vehicles safe and roadworthy. This relaxation doesn't apply to commercially-used large goods vehicles (maximum weight of 3.5 tonnes) and buses (vehicles with eight or more seats).

**Closed Motorway Lanes:** New laws to fine motorists that are caught driving in closed motorway lanes will be introduced in spring 2018. Smart motorways run on four lanes, and in peak periods automated signs open and close the hard-shoulder to ease traffic congestion. Driving in a closed lane is already illegal, but the new law will bring in new fixed penalty fines for drivers flouting this rule. Cameras will monitor motorways and catch drivers breaking the speed limit or driving in a closed lane. It is hoped that the new provision will both lessen frustrations of law-abiding motorists and reduce the risk to emergency crews / breakdown operatives who work in closed lanes.

**MOT Category Changes:** From May MOT test results will be sorted into three new categories: dangerous; major and minor. Cars which receive a dangerous or major listing instantly fail the test. A minor defect will enable it to pass, but it'll be noted down on the MOT certificate. Diesel particulate filters will also form part of the revised MOT test from this date. A car will automatically fail if the filter has been removed or tampered with. The new emissions test, to be applied from May – **The Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicles Test Procedure** (WLTP) – will also be tougher on measuring fuel economy and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. Supporting this will be the **Real Driving Emissions** test (RDE), which will measure the amount of nitrous oxide (NOx) created by the car. Diesel cars may struggle with this part of the test, as their engines emit higher levels of NOx than petrol engines.

**Learner Drivers On Motorways:** Following a short consultation early last year it has now been decided that some learner drivers will be able to use motorways, under certain conditions. The changes will give learners the option of having lessons on motorways, should their instructor deem them competent enough to do so. Only learners driving vehicles fitted with dual controls and accompanied by an approved driving instructor will be permitted to drive on motorways. Although no definite date is set, the change will be made sometime this year. There are, however, no plans to incorporate motorway driving into the new driving test that has been in operation since December 2017. Later in the year new laws are likely to be introduced to restrict new drivers from using their vehicles at night for the first two years after passing their test.



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#### Useful Contacts:

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Editorial & Layout – Neal Fowler

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