

Bexley Borough Neighbourhood Watch Association



Newsletter Winter 2011

New Year's message from The Chairman

On behalf of the Committee I wish you a very peaceful and happy New Year and thank you for all the work you've carried out over the last 12 months.

The future looks to be challenging financially, especially finding the funding needed to continue office administration for a further year. We will also be looking for funding for street signs and monies for office running costs. Bexley Borough Neighbourhood Watch is a charity run by volunteers which does not receive any Government funding. Therefore we ask for your help in seeking sponsorship and would welcome any suggestions that you may have to raise funds.

With a new Borough Police Commander and Superintendent starting in the New Year we will be asking them for a meeting to maintain the support for Neighbourhood Watch that we have had since the Association started in 1998.

In 2010 London Borough Bexley provided a grant to replace our outdated

computer equipment, at the same time we updated our internet and electronic mail systems allowing us to start to move Neighbourhood Watch to a fully electronic based communication system. All communication with members (co-ordinators and their deputies) will be via email in 2011. This will enable us to provide more timely and frequent communications and allow us to replace the previous periodic newsletter with a quarterly update for all members, the majority being sent electronically; the minority of members who do not have internet access will receive paper copies of newsletters only. In addition we will make greater use of our website where we will post information such as an electronic handbook so that members may access them online and print out their own copies only if they wish. We hope that you will encourage residents in your watches to access the website and read newsletters online.

We firmly believe in the value of Neighbourhood Watch to our community. We need to embrace change in a positive way and are looking at how we can re-engage with members and residents as well as

expand our coverage and scope. You will see throughout this newsletter that we ask for your feedback on individual issues and will listen to your opinions. Please feel free to contact me by email to bexwatch-office@btconnect.com with CHAIRMAN in the subject/title line. If you don't have email then write to me at Bexley Borough Neighbourhood Watch Association, Belvedere Police Station, 2 Nuxley Road, Belvedere, DA17 5JF.

Have we got your email address?

Sending you information by email not only saves us time and money but enables us to keep you more informed about timely issues and events. Currently, we hold valid email addresses for about 60% of co-ordinators and deputies but we'd like that to be much higher. Also each time we send out an email we get a small number of error messages telling us the email address is unobtainable. We promise not to bombard you with emails and we will not share your email address without your permission. If you change your email address or wish to start receiving emails from us

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please let us know by sending your details in an email to bexwatch-office@btconnect.com with EMAIL ADDRESS in the subject/title line.

If you want to keep your NW activity separate from your work or personal email then we are happy to set up an anonymous email account for you. Just let us know.

How we use your data

As a small charitable organisation we do not have to register with the Information Commissioner (re. The Data Protection Act) because we only hold a limited set of personal data and use this solely to manage our list of members and to communicate with them directly. We strive to take great care of your data and not divulge it to other parties. However, we must point out that the processes involved in setting up a new watch and its subsequent operation mean that local SNT's will have your initial contact details and it is only sensible that we keep them updated with changes. Nevertheless, we will in future not automatically pass any email address details to the

SNT's but leave it to your personal choice whether you want to register with them for their email communications. If you have any issues with this approach please email to bexwatch-office@btconnect.com with DATA in the subject/title line.

Visit our website

You may already know that we have a website www.bexleywatch.org.uk but if you've visited it in the past you will probably have noticed it has been rather out of date. This is all about to change. You may already be reading this newsletter from a copy downloaded from the website. Shortly the Watches and Handbook sections should also have been completed. We plan to keep the website constantly updated so please become a regular visitor. If you want to tell us what you think of the website and make suggestions on how we could improve the content please send an email to bexwatch-office@btconnect.com with WEBSITE FEEDBACK in the subject/title line.

Missing or multiple communications

We know that some members missed emails whilst many

others received multiple emails and letters about the SNT Review meeting held in December. We emailed all NW co-ordinators and deputies for whom we held an email address on our register at the time. Our emails always include 'Neighbourhood Watch' in the subject/title line. We know that not all emails get through although the number is very small. If you didn't receive an email from us then the most likely causes are: a) we don't have your correct email address, b) there was a temporary fault with an email server, c) your mailbox was full or d) we were in the process of adding/updating your details on our register.

The Police sent letters on our behalf to those for whom we did not have an email address. All other emails and letters were sent by the Police or related agencies using their own lists e.g. Neighbourhood Link, local SNT's have lists of SNT Panel Members and NW members. These lists are generally not shared so there was no attempt to de-duplicate those of you who appeared on more than one list to ensure you received only one communication. This is bound to happen again but on balance it's better to be

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informed several times rather than not at all.

Are you getting a discount?

A financial benefit of living in a Neighbourhood Watch area can be discounts on your home contents insurance. This is not a guaranteed benefit as there are many factors that affect individual insurance premiums and may change from year to year. Members tell us that discounts of between 3% and 5% have been obtained. Using products such as Smartwater may attract further discounts. Just remember to ask or tick the box online next time you renew your insurance.

Is it a hoax?

Regular email users will know how much SPAM (unsolicited, junk email) comes in each day. Most are easy to spot e.g. those apparently offering cheap, replica watches and pharmaceutical products, even if your SPAM or junk email filter hasn't already done so. You can also cut down unwanted emails from companies you once enquired about or bought something from by following the

'unsubscribe' process they should provide.

What is sometimes more difficult to spot is whether emails received from friends and colleagues containing warnings about scams e.g. with credit cards or premium rate telephone charges, are genuine causes for concern or just hoaxes. However plausible these emails sound, anything with a message at the bottom encouraging you to forward it to everyone you know should immediately make you suspicious. There are often other telltale signs such as Americanised spelling and phrases. Some are so convincing and the source credible e.g. the Parcel Delivery Service warning sent out by the Met and others. The best check is to use the web; try www.hoax-slayer.com. Tell your friends too and together you can help stamp out this menace.

Sponsor our street signs

If you are a member of a local association or business, you could help support us by sponsoring our street signs. The cost is £10 per sign plus a £25 set-up fee, with a minimum of 25 signs so the total cost would be £275 for

25 signs. For that your name or logo could be added to new street signs, you will receive a framed certificate and be recognised on our website. Please contact the office for further details write or send an email to bexwatch-office@btconnect.com with SPONSORSHIP in the subject/title line.

Untaxed Vehicles

During these times of financial cut-backs many of us may face extra challenges in managing our money but it is not fair on all of the residents who do pay their taxes that some people try and evade paying theirs. Our SNT's will continue to identify any cars without tax but would appreciate your help. Members of the public can report these vehicles by the following contacting www.direct.gov.uk/untaxedvehicles. You need the following information: vehicle registration number, make, model and colour then as much as you can about the location and time where and when the vehicle is usually parked. Please take care and don't put yourself at risk when collecting this information.

The Next Census day is the 27th March 2011

For the first time you will be able to complete the census

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online (www.census.gov.uk). Completing the online questionnaire is straightforward, convenient and secure. Each person's details take about ten minutes to fill in. Large families (more than six people) can be recorded on one household's online census questionnaire. The online census automatically skips some questions when appropriate (e.g. it will not, for example, ask about young children's degree qualifications). You can choose between completing your census questionnaire online or posting it back. You will need your paper questionnaire to get your internet access code to access your online questionnaire.

Confidentiality is taken very seriously. ONS has a 200 year track record of keeping census questionnaires confidential. Census data are protected by law and everyone working on the census signs a confidentiality undertaking to prove they understand that. It's a criminal offence to disclose information. The data is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act under section 40 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. More information can be found at www.census.gov.uk.

Distraction Burglary Event - Tuesday 25th January 2011

If you weren't one of the 75 attendees, various speakers from BCPEG as well as the new Police Chief Superintendent and representatives from Age Concern (now merged with Help the Aged and known as Age UK), spoke about the vulnerable at home and how they were being foiled by distraction burglaries.

The 3 most common were;

- 1) Someone knocks at the door and asks for a piece of paper and pen, claiming they have come a long way to visit a nearby elderly resident and they are out and they wish to leave a note. Whilst the resident goes to get pen and paper they nip in and steel what they can.
- 2) Someone knocks at the door claiming to be from the water board and asking if the resident will run their taps so they can check the pressure, there are often 2 people and whilst the resident goes to turn on their taps they nip in and steel what they can.
- 3) Finally the old con of knocking on the door saying that they feel unwell (often can be a

woman) and asking for a glass of water, whilst the resident goes to get it the person nips in and steels what they can.

Cold calling, with cowboy builders overcharging for shoddy work or work that does not really need to be done was also mentioned and a firsthand experience of distraction theft at cash-point, this one is well worth knowing about. Whilst a person was getting cash from a machine, someone taps them on the shoulder and asked if a five pound note that was on the floor was theirs, whilst the person was distracted away from the machine for a few seconds, their card was stolen by another person, they had apparently already spotted the person's pin number being put in, so were able to go on a spending spree with the card before the account was closed.

Age concern outlined what they can do to help the more house bound senior citizens and they have volunteers to assist in many areas, including minor repairs, gardening and even volunteers that will visit for an hour once a week for a chat. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk.