

LOOK OUT

Helping to protect over 12,000 homes

April 2009

From the Chairman, Keith Roberts

As avid readers of Look Out you may have noticed that our editor, Peter Dallas, has revised the format of our heading for this and our other H&D NHW forms. The reason for the change is that several people have commented that where they live they did not think that they were part of this organisation. My feeling is that perhaps we have become too 'Harrogate Centric' and that we should ensure that we are more broadly based. We should, for instance, do much more in developing the rural areas, where detection rates are relatively poor and Members can help by reporting suspicious incidents.

Your Committee

At our recent Committee Meeting we welcomed Chris Oates as a new member. Chris has taken over the management of SmartWater, the very successful household product coding material. As a reminder, all our meeting minutes are openly published on our website and details of SmartWater and other security goods are to be found there. We welcome anyone to join us at our meetings and there are no commitments, but we should especially welcome representation from Ripon and the surrounding rural areas, with a view to possibly joining us and helping us develop areas not currently covered by NHW.

No Cold Calling Zones (NCCZs)

The number of incidents of cold calling by rogue traders is inevitably expected to rise, due to the economic climate and

unemployment levels. As many residents may not see the local newspaper, our recently published article on this subject is reproduced here:

"NCCZs – What's this?"

What, you might ask, do you mean by NCCZs? In full NCCZ stands for No Cold Calling Zones and we wish to bring to your attention some of the background and benefits of the formation of these zones in our area and how to encourage and go about setting up such schemes.

NCCZs are formally set up by the Trading Standards Dept. of North Yorkshire County Council as one part of an initiative designed to reduce distraction burglaries and rogue trading (doorstep crime). Trading Standards, in partnership with North Yorkshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch and other bodies, promotes the formation of these schemes in order to support residents in an effort to stop uninvited salespeople from calling at your house. Although there are relatively few instances of doorstep crime, there are still too many and you may have read about bogus water board officials entering under false pretences, drive or tarmac laying repairs with 'cheap materials surplus to contract', roof tiling repairs or replacement, furniture and garden materials left over from a sale or exhibition, etc. and some fish sellers and unidentified charity collectors are currently active in this area. Usually the old, single, more vulnerable person is the victim. Besides being upsetting there is evidence that it can be very costly as these rogues often demand cash payment for unnecessary work, which considerably exceeds their original verbal quotation, and



**HARROGATE & DISTRICT
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION**

Registered charity number 1076228

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in some instances payment has been many thousands of pounds over a period of two or three years.

So far there are about 200 NCCZ schemes in North Yorkshire, of which 30 are in the Harrogate/Knaresborough area. Council funding is, as always, limited and it is therefore important to make an early evaluation as to the need for setting up a scheme in your locality and submitting an application requesting the 'Creation of a NCCZ'. It is necessary to identify one person to represent the residents in a small area to make the application. The person may be a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, Parish Councillor, Representative Resident or a member of your Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT). If the 'leader' is from NHW, it helps to hold a NHW meeting to agree on the need and justification and furthermore to obtain the agreement of the Parish Council and Police SNT before submitting the application. By justification, we mean, that the core objective of preventing or reducing crime or the fear of crime can be met, the zone is relatively small, and can be defined geographically, with limited point(s) of access, has a high percentage of vulnerable residents, and consultation with householders demonstrates 100% agreement.

If there have been incidents with rogue traders in the locality, agreeing with the police and mentioning the facts of the case(s) would usually help to prioritise the application. On receipt of the application, Trading Standards Officers will assess the case. If supportive, they will circulate a letter to all residents defining the main purpose (NHW Co-ordinators can assist with the letter-drop) and follow up with personal visits at a pre-arranged date to carry out a survey of opinions. Following the routine assessment, Trading Standards will post signs at appropriate points informing cold callers and uninvited guests that they are not welcome in that area. Residents are informed how to deal with such people and

how to contact Trading Standards and the Police in the event of cold callers ignoring the signs.

We are particularly conscious of the fact that in many situations the cold calling is often a ruse to identify which property and owner/resident is most vulnerable for a subsequent burglary to be carried out by the same person(s) or associates.

Unfortunately, the number of reported incidents is very small, because over 85% of victims do not report, usually because they are embarrassed and many would not even admit to family members that they had been so gullible. So we need a concerted effort to report incidents to Trading Standards or the Police SNTs, noting any names on vehicles and registration numbers. Neighbourhood Watch members must keep a watchful eye on the premises of the old and vulnerable and should not hesitate to report unusually suspicious looking vehicles. The con-men will come back repeatedly once they have been given some cash.

It is only by reporting such instances, that the authorities can piece together several incidents and gain evidence to prosecute. There is now legislation for the professionals to take action and help in our quest to combat such crime if the deterrent of a NCCZ scheme is insufficient.

Trading Standards can be contacted directly on: 01609 534800."

Co-ordinators' Corner

We are always seeking ways to improve methods of communication between the 850+ NHW Schemes, and between ourselves and the police. From discussions we are convinced that there should be an opportunity to 'air your views' on how to improve, ultimately leading to 'best practice'. Data Protection is usually quoted as a reason for not being able to divulge contact details of your neighbouring Co-ordinators. If we want to play our part in the quest for

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safer neighbourhoods, we as NHW members can always bring issues to the fore via networking. You can be assured that we are currently reviewing NY NHW/NYP relations in order to improve the situation - but don't hold your breath! We are hoping to have a 'Co-ordinators' Corner' on our website, where anyone can raise issues, challenge the committee, report on successful ventures, relate to neighbouring schemes – literally anything that can sensibly be published. In the meantime use this email info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk for a response on any of the above matters. We can also use LOOK OUT for general responses.

Communication

The best method is email. If you do not have it, try finding a friend or neighbour who has, and who can receive, forward and copy messages for you. If you have recently got email, let us know so you can receive messages in this way. Please also distribute copies of LOOK OUT to your members.

Policing Pledge

You may have heard or read about the latest 'Home Office Initiative' for the police. North Yorkshire Police recently signed up to the pledge and I would suggest that it is worth reading and if implemented successfully there should be a significant improvement in Safer Neighbourhood Policing. It is published on the NYP website, which can be accessed via our NHW website. If you do not have access to a computer, please ask for a copy at your local police station.

National Neighbourhood Watch Week

The week from Monday, 15th June to Sunday, 21st June is National Neighbourhood Watch Week and we shall be playing our part in our area. There will be NHW activity in all parts, promoting our organisation, giving advice and hopefully encouraging the expansion with the formation of new schemes. We plan a

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programme with the use of the Mobile Police Office (MPO) as a focal point, and for detailed movements please check out our diary of events on our website nearer the time. To be effective we do need additional helpers instead of relying on the few. If you would be prepared to volunteer on this occasion please inform us on info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk or me on 01937 584998 for those without computer access.

Fire & Rescue Service

NHW works closely with the Fire & Rescue Service (as with the police) aiming for safer neighbourhoods, and they are always very helpful in joining our meetings. As long as budgets are available F&R will provide and fit smoke alarms for free, as well as supplying replacement electric blankets for any over three years old, and even replacement deep fat fryers. Please make your old and vulnerable neighbours aware of this facility and make the necessary arrangements on their behalf with your local fire station.

News from Tina Oates

Co-ordinator Support Forums

Recently we have been delighted to welcome a greatly increased number of Co-ordinators and members to our new-styled Co-ordinator Support Forums – previously known as Training Evenings. Attendance has been really encouraging and the less formal atmosphere seems to have engendered greater interaction between co-ordinators, leading to an exchange of ideas, and discussion of solutions to each other's problems. Each occasion has welcomed some new Co-ordinators who were pleased to have found this support. Those attending agreed that the evenings are very informative and worthwhile.

If you haven't been along to one yet the next is on May 27th at 7:30pm at St.

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George's Social Club, St George's Road, Harrogate, HG2 2DY. We look forward to welcoming you.

New North Yorkshire Association

H&DNWA's efforts to increase cross-county communication have at last come to fruition with the formation of the North Yorkshire Neighbourhood Watch Association – to be known as NYNHWA in future. This was decided at a meeting of delegates from all eight county districts, on 5th March at The Bridge Inn, Walshford. Two administrators for National Neighbourhood Watch, plus the Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Representative came to give advice and update us on plans for the future of Neighbourhood Watch as a whole. Several officers from NYP also joined the discussion. However the vote and decision was entirely NW led, as it is OUR Association, with non-voting NYP representatives. It now means that NW representatives in North Yorkshire speak with greater weight and authority when negotiating with police and other bodies. The Inaugural Meeting of the association is to be held at NYP HQ, Newby Wiske on 19th May.

New Schemes

Progress on the home front has not been slow - 20 new schemes have been set up in the last three months, covering the villages of Spofforth, Nun Monkton, and Littlethorpe, and additional schemes in Granby Ward, Harrogate. We wish them well and hope to see their Co-ordinators at the Co-ordinator Support Forum in May.

Safety & Security Initiative

NYP Sgt. Nick Widdowson of Harrogate North SNT (Safer Neighbourhood Team) is currently running a safety and security initiative in Lower Nidderdale. Community and group discussions have been held to discuss priority issues in the villages, most recently in Hampsthwaite, where speeding,

parking, cycle safety, bogus officials, security measures and products, were covered. Further meetings to demonstrate security items, including SmartWater and Immobilise, have been planned. The first is for Hampsthwaite on 27th April at The Joiner's Arms, where SmartWater will be available for purchase on the night. The following one, for Killinghall, will be advertised soon. It is hoped that as many residents as possible will come along to support the meetings.

Your News, Views and Ideas

Remember, if you've had an annual get-together, outing, or got a good idea, then we want to hear about it and spread the news to others. Email the subject 'News' to Tina at: info@nwatchharrogate.org.uk

Welcome Packs

If you have new people moving into your area, make sure you give them a Welcome Pack. This is a good way of introducing yourself and NHW. The Packs can be requested from Betty Squires on 01423 544834. They will normally be delivered to your nearest Police Station for you to collect.

From the Treasurer, Katy Piazza

As a Charity, our voluntary contributions are carefully spent on fighting crime and reducing the fear of crime. Costs are increasing all the time and we rely on small contributions from established schemes. We have only received one donation from almost 900 schemes since the last LOOK OUT. If your Scheme has not made a donation recently, please consider making one now. We would also welcome any ideas on fund raising. Please send donations to: Katy Piazza, 8 Woods Court, Harrogate, HG2 9QP. (Cheques payable please to Harrogate & District Neighbourhood Watch Association)

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