

## Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter July 2015

Generally we live in a peaceful and safe area but it helps to be aware of the threats that are out there!!

**Common Local Crime.** Most of the crime in our region involves theft of items which can be turned in to cash relatively easily. Much of this sort of crime is opportunistic in that it involves stealing unguarded items either from unlocked homes, vehicles or handbags in shopping trolleys etc. or breaking in to outbuildings which have no alarm protection and are routinely unmanned. The sort of items taken range from hand held tools, bicycles, purses, electronic equipment and jewellery. Bigger items such as quad bikes, ride-on mowers and trailers are also common targets for the organised gangs who often identify their target beforehand and come in vehicles to facilitate their crimes. We can protect ourselves and deter all but the most determined thieves by:

**Keep our property secure:** lock doors and windows on houses and vehicles, keep valuables secure and guarded and be alert to distractions especially in public places.

**Install deterrents:** lights on timers, alarms, secure locks, even planting prickly bushes under windows etc. will make opportunistic thieves look elsewhere for easier targets.

**Mark Property:** while this might not stop items being stolen it will improve the chance of items being returned and convictions secured. Simply marking an item with your postcode or using systems such as Smartwater can help.

**Security Advice:** If you need advice contact your local police who can provide professional security advice. Schemes already exist to help owners in rural areas protect their properties.

### *SCAMS*

**Computers:** There are a variety of scams in existence which continue to be perpetrated both nationally and within our region. Indeed very recently one Orleton resident was called by someone claiming to be from a company like Microsoft or Google and asking the individual to switch on their computer. Thankfully the resident declined but the scammer probably hoped to gain remote access to the computer and through it to personal information leading to money.

Another alternative means of attacking computers is through emails with attachments which carry viruses such as 'Torrent Locker'. This form of malware, if downloaded, encrypts files and demands a ransom to unlock the system. This virus has been found recently attached to emails purporting to come from companies such as British Gas or government departments such as The Ministry of Justice! Such computer attacks are not just against individuals but also against small companies so beware before opening emails and ensure your system protection is operating.

**Telephone:** The most common scams involve telephone calls where the caller claims to be from the police or your bank and where there is some problem involving your credit or debit cards. They will either ask for personal details, pins etc. and then say a courier will come and collect the card. If you decline to give details they will give you a number to call or suggest that you call your bank but then leave your line connected so that when you call back it goes straight to the scammer. The best defence is to refuse to give personal details, avoid engaging in discussions and do not hand over credit or debit cards to 'couriers'. If you do want to call to check with your bank or the police either use another phone line or mobile and or leave sufficient time for the scammer to lose interest in keeping your line occupied.

**Cold Callers:** Finally beware of cold callers who claim to be from utility companies or local or national government officials. Check any identification. Do not allow them in to your home unless you are confident they are who they claim to be and do not leave them unescorted in your home. Do not provide personal information and/or cards which may give access to your bank accounts. If they are official they will be happy to wait until you call the appropriate numbers to confirm identification.

**Rogue Traders.** On the subject of cold callers be very cautious about people who call offering to do work at special rates 'because they happen to be in the area'. Often they will do roof repairs, driveways, garden clearance or painting and always for cash at a special rate. More often than not they are not qualified nor regulated and the work costs more than expected because unexpected problems arise. Also individuals will call selling items ranging from jewellery to cleaning materials. If you do not know the trader be very cautious about buying services or items from cold callers. Use Trading Standards to check qualifications and licences and if in doubt call the police.

**Useful Contacts:** The nearest manned public service counter is at Hereford Police Station, Bath Street. Open: Monday to Saturday: 8am to 8 pm, Sundays and Bank Holidays: 10am to 4pm Leominster Police Station has a phone system at its entrance where members of the public can speak to the police and get help.

Victim Support	01432 347208
Childline	0800 1111
Domestic Violence Helpline	0800 7831359
National Drugs Helpline	0800 776 600
National Neighbourhood Watch Association	02079 630160
Herefordshire Road Safety Hotline	01432 364582
Police Website:	<a href="http://www.westmercia.police.uk">www.westmercia.police.uk</a>
HFD NHW:	<a href="http://www.communigate.co.uk/here/hfdsneiwatch/">www.communigate.co.uk/here/hfdsneiwatch/</a>

Contact the police on a non-urgent basis on 101 or via 0300 333 3000 and give your details to the operator. In emergency dial 999. If you would like to report anything anonymously please call CRIMESTOPPERS on 0800 555 111.