



Distribution: NHW Forum members, Area Co-ordinators, Sup. Toby Davies, C/I Ryan Doyle, Insp. Shaun Kenneally, Sgts. Neil Walkey & Dave Monkton, Neighbourhood PCs, PCSOs & PCO Kim Foster.



Torrige District Neighbourhood Watch

Notes of the Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting held on Wednesday 5th September 2018 at 7.15pm at the Methodist School Room, Bradworthy

The meeting was Chaired and opened by David Braziel, Vice Chair of Torrige District NHW, who explained that Tom Carrick was unable to be with us due to ill health and a spell of hospitalisation, although he was now recovering at home again. He then asked the other members of the top table to introduce themselves:

1. CM Steve Fisher, Resource Manager with the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.
2. PC Mandy Brown, Neighbourhood Beat Team Manager based at Holsworthy.
3. PFCSO Mark James, also based at Holsworthy.
4. Mike Jackson, Secretary of Torrige District NHW.

After the introductions we moved straight on to the presentations, starting with Steve Fisher who gave a talk about fire safety in the home.

High risk homes involve: people over 55 years of age, people with mental health conditions, poor housekeeping (i.e. too much clutter in the home), under the influence of drink or drugs, smokers, people with limited mobility and people who live alone.

The smoke alarms which are now fitted have 10 years life batteries but they should still be tested on a weekly basis and "vacuumed" regularly to remove any build-up of dust which can prevent them working properly. In the event of a fire it is usually the smoke which puts victims into a deep sleep and prevents them taking action. Alarms should be sited on the ground floor in communal areas such as hallways, and fixed to the ceiling away from the wall and light fittings. They should also be sited on landings in multi-level properties. Alarms should NOT be sited in kitchens or bath/shower rooms. It is now common practise to fit heat sensor alarms in kitchens which can be linked into the other smoke alarms in the house.

For people that have hearing disabilities the Fire Service is able to fit a special smoke alarm that links wirelessly to a separate unit which can be placed under the users pillow so that they can be alerted by vibrating when they are asleep, even though they will not be wearing their hearing aid(s) and a strobe light unit to sit on a bedside cabinet.

In kitchen areas a fire blanket can be a useful piece of equipment especially if the house uses a chip pan or deep-fat fryer. Water should never be used on any type of oil/fat fire as it will explode and make the situation far worse and could well lead to personal injury. Try to turn off the hob, close the kitchen door and call the Fire Service if there is any concern. Electric toasters which are sited underneath wall cabinets, and which are not cleaned out regularly are also fire risks.

Fire extinguishers can be useful but you need to know how to use them correctly and they need to be kept 'in date', in order that you be able to rely on them to work properly. The extinguisher should be matched to the location where it is to be used i.e. water filled should not be used on oil/fat fires. It should be kept in a position

where it will be useful to help with your escape from a fire, so that you are safe, and the fire service can then deal with the fire.

7000 house fires per annum are caused by electrical problems. Electrical extension leads are a major area of concern. Multi-faced adaptors are especially prone to overheating when high wattage equipment is being used. It is far safer to use separate sockets or purpose made multi-extension leads which are power rated and should be fused. Electric blankets are another problem area. When being stored away from the bed it is best to roll the blanket loosely rather than folding it and do not store other items on top of it as these will compress the blanket and can damage the wiring.

It is now good practice to fit a carbon monoxide detector for households which have open fires, stoves and wood-burners. Dry wood is best for burning because wet, unseasoned wood gives off steam and gases which condense and leave deposits in the chimney. These can lead to chimney fires because deposits build up and so chimneys should be swept once or twice a year depending on usage.

Carbon monoxide can't be seen, tasted or detected by smell. This is the most common cause of household poisoning. It is heavier than air and difficult to disperse. Drowsiness, headaches, feeling sick and hallucinating are all signs of carbon monoxide poisoning and immediate action should be taken if this is suspected because a build-up can lead to fatalities.

Cigarettes and candles can cause problems because naked flames are involved and accidents can happen. Tea lights, which might seem to be safer, can also be a cause of problems because the metal case gets very hot and can set fire to what the tea light is sat on.

Finally, people should not overlook having an escape plan from their property. Try to close doors as this will delay the spread of the fire. If you think that there is a fire on the other side of a door DO NOT OPEN IT. Instead, look for smoke coming round the edges, especially the top, in order to get confirmation. Do not touch the handle as this could be very hot and burn you. Touch the door lightly with the back of your hand to test for heat and also listen for noises. If you are escaping through an external door make sure that you know where the key is if it is not left in the lock. This also applies to windows, which are often fitted with locks for security reasons. It is recommended having a phone in the bedroom so that if you are trapped you can phone 999, and give as much detail as you are able in order to pinpoint your precise location to help your rescuers save time in finding you. If you are trapped in an upstairs room, shut the door and try to block smoke coming underneath and wait by the window for the Fire Service to arrive to rescue you.

Steve finished his presentation by advising that the Fire Service is always happy to make free 'Home Safety Checks' to make recommendations and to arrange this call **0800 0502 999** or via the website **www.dsfire.gov.uk** or by email at **firekills@dsfire.gov.uk**.

David thanked Steve for a very interesting and informative talk which was followed by a round of applause from the floor in appreciation.

Second Presentation

Mandy explained that Holsworthy Police have a recent new addition to their response team, PC Lee Skinner, who had transferred across from Hampshire Police where he was part of a small specialist unit dealing exclusively with wildlife and rural crimes. Whilst he was now part of the response team he wished to use his training and skills to benefit his new posting and had asked Mandy to present the information on his behalf.

Despite the title of "Wildlife", Lee wishes to stress that he also deals with farms, livestock, fisheries, plant (machinery), CITES, environmental crimes, habitat destruction and endangered species. This is a wide area and Mandy advised that she also dealt with such matters.

So what type of thing might be covered?

- Hunting and shooting offences
- Fishing offences

- Hare coursing
- Poaching of deer, pheasants and hare
- Incidents involving farm animals
- Worrying of livestock by dogs
- Crimes and incidents on protected land areas e.g. nature reserves
- Badgers
- Bats
- Endangered species such as the theft of eggs and chicks
- Plants and trees
- Suspicious activity

Mandy clarified various of these points whilst responding to questions raised by the audience.

Q. What are heritage crimes?

A. Such things like the theft of lead from a church roof and stonework from other historic buildings, both of which tend to be in isolated locations.

Q. What is CITES?

A. It is an acronym for “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”. It covers such things as ivory, rhino horn, tortoises and other protected species.

Q. Are orchids covered under this umbrella?

A. Certain varieties are.

Q. What is the position of llamas and alpacas?

A. These are not classed as farm animals at the present time but only because legislation has not kept up with current farming trends.

Q. What is considered a “pest” species?

A. We no longer have any pest species. There are circumstances when some species need to be culled and a licence is needed to carry this out.

Q. What police staff are currently based at Holsworthy?

A. There are 8 staff in total, although Sgt. Dave Monkton is also responsible for Torrington Office. 4 PCs – apart from Mandy and Lee there are PC Dominic Plumb, PC Neil Hellens and PC Nina Domachowska. PCSO Emma Tomkies and PFCSO Mark James. PCSO Raquel Rowe transferred to Okehampton several months ago, and is not expected to be replaced.

Q. What is classed as suspicious activity?

A. If a padlock on a gate or building is found to be cut with no other obvious criminal activity. A criminal may be waiting to see how quickly the padlock is replaced to give an indication of how often the site is visited, before coming back to carry out the crime.
Also, unknown vehicles which are parked in unusual places or seen to be loitering.

Q. Are farmers still allowed to shoot dogs which are worrying livestock?

A. Yes, but they must also report the action which they have taken.

Q. Holsworthy Town Council wished to remove some new graffiti recently but were requested

to leave it in place by the Police. Why would this be?

- A.** It may be that the Police enquiry was still ongoing or possibly, if there was a good chance of finding the culprit(s), that they would be made to clean up the mess.
- Q.** There was a petrol theft from the local garage two months ago with CCTV footage identifying the culprits. They are still driving around in an untaxed vehicle and nothing appears to have been done about it. Why not?
- A.** Mandy said that she was not familiar with this particular incident but it could be that enquiries were still ongoing. They can sometimes take a great deal longer to complete for a number of reasons. The victims (the garage owner) would be able to get an update from the officer dealing with the matter.

With no further questions forthcoming, Mandy mentioned that the Police rely on the public for intelligence gathering and that if we don't tell them about something which has happened or is happening, then they can't do anything about it.

The contact details for Lee are:

**North Devon Wildlife/Rural Crime Officer - PC 7357 Skinner
07710 918073 or lee.skinner@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk**

David thanked Mandy and Mark for their presentation and before closing the meeting raised the subject of the ALERT messaging system, of which he is the administrator for Devon and Cornwall. Most of the audience were signed up to it although a couple of people didn't seem to have received any messages for some time. This was thought to be people who received phone messages under the CMS system and didn't have an email address registered. David asked for their details to be left with him at the end of the meeting so that he could check into the matter.

For anyone wanting to register for the ALERT messages it can be done online at "**alerts.dc.police.uk**" or a form can be downloaded direct from our NHW website at **<http://torridgenhw.ourwatch.org.uk/pages/3915/1/Downloadables.html>**

With no further matters to be raised, David thanked everybody for coming and wished them a safe journey home.

The Meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Note 1: *The format of these Notes differs from previously, following feedback and suggestions made in the recent co-ordinator questionnaire. The request was for more informality at the meetings and to not have published the "apologies for absence" which we receive. Nor have we published the details of the attendees. We will still ask for attendees' details as these may be needed should a venue need to be evacuated due to an emergency and it will also give the Forum an indication of who is actually attending meetings.*