



NW NEWS

West Kent

Your co-ordinator is:.....

Tel No.

Watchout

The Voice of the West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association

Issue 70

"Security through awareness"

Spring 2026

Our Community is Bursting into Bloom

Last autumn, thanks to Kent County Council Combined Members Grant Scheme, our community secured funding to plant 4,000 daffodils along verges and green space. After a fun planting session in October 2025, the results are spectacular as daffodils are now in full bloom, brightening our neighbourhood.

On Saturday 4 April we are launching our Community Sunflower Competition. We can't wait to see how tall and cheerful our sunflowers grow. Updates will follow as the summer progresses.

Many thanks to Brenda Homewood and Matthew Childs from Fant and Oakwood areas, who we welcome onto West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Committee, for these lovely pictures. It also shows two little children who enjoyed planting the bulbs with their daddy. To see the daffodils in bloom is saying Spring is here.



Be Aware: Courier Fraud Targeting Kent

We have been receiving reports from Kent residents receiving calls from a criminal impersonating a police officer.

What these criminals do:

The criminal may be able to **confirm some basic details about you** such as your full name and address. They may then claim:

- Your **bank account has been compromised.**
- Someone is **in custody** who say they are related to you or with a copy of your bank card.
- They need your help with a **police investigation.**

They will then instruct you to:

- Withdraw **large sums of cash.**
- Buy **gift cards, foreign currency, or high-value goods such as gold, jewellery and watches.**

- Hand over your **bank card.**

They may say an **undercover officer** will collect the items from your home.

They might even tell you to **lie to bank staff about what the money is for**, claiming they're "in on it."

THIS IS A SCAM!

The Police will **NEVER:**

- Ask for your **bank details.**
- Tell you to **withdraw cash or buy foreign currency or high value goods.**
- Ask you to **lie to anyone.**

PROTECT YOURSELF – Remember the A B C of Fraud:

Never ASSUME – Never assume a caller is genuine. Criminals may know basic information about you.

Never BELIEVE – Never believe a caller is genuine – scammers can 'spoo' official

telephone numbers, so the call display may show as an official number such as the police or banks telephone number, but it does not mean it is a genuine call.

Always CONFIRM – always confirm if the call is genuine – Ask the caller for their name and badge number. Tell the caller you will hang up and call back to confirm.

To ensure the criminals are still not on the line, use an alternative phone and call police on 101 to establish if the call was genuine.

If you do not have another phone to hand, call a trusted friend or family member first, to ensure the line is cleared, or you can unplug the landline, wait for 10 minutes and then call police to confirm.

If a courier arrives at your property ring 999.

If this has happened to you please contact your bank immediately by calling 159 and report it to Kent Police on 101.

Chimneys and open fires

By having your chimney and flue swept and inspected regularly, you can help to prevent a chimney fire and structural damage to your property.

Chimneys need to be regularly swept because when wood or coal is burnt, gasses are given off. These can turn into soot as well as tar (creosote) which builds up and sticks to the inside of the chimney. When this happens chimneys can catch fire. Sometimes birds' nests, loose bricks and other debris can also fall into a chimney, acting as extra fuel.

Did you know? Your home building and contents insurance may be invalidated if you have a chimney fire and your chimney has not been regularly swept.

How often should I have my chimneys swept and checked?

- If you burn logs, you should have this done at least twice a year.
- If you burn coal, you should have this done at least once a year.

Real fires and wood burning stoves.

As well as having your chimney regularly swept, don't forget wood burning stoves need an annual service too. When using real fires or wood burning stoves:

- Have wood burning stoves serviced every year.
- Avoid overloading the grate or building fires too high.
- Dispose of ash safely and appropriately.
- Have a carbon monoxide alarm in the area and be aware of the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Never leave an open fire unattended and ensure the door of a wood burning stove is closed if you wish to temporarily leave the room.
- Always ensure ash is cold before disposing of it.

Carbon monoxide.

This invisible gas with no smell or taste can be a killer. Faulty appliances that burn solid fuels such as coal and wood (as well as those that use gas or oil) can produce it. Make sure you are aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide and have a carbon monoxide alarm in your home to alert you to its presence.

Things you can do.

Between having your chimney regularly swept and inspected by your chimney professional, there are quick chimney checks you can do yourself.

Stand outside your property and look at your chimney. If you see any of the following, call your chimney professional:

- Check for moss or grass growing out of your chimney – it's a sign it needs repair and if you had a chimney fire, could lead to smoke spread in your property.
- Does your chimney lean to one side? Or is the top of it missing? Some damage may not be noticeable because it is located inside the chimney. However that damage could allow a chimney fire to spread into the roof or other parts of your home.
- If there are missing or cracked mortar joints or bricks, this is a sign your chimney needs repair. Look out for crumbling mortar falling onto your fireplace or stove.

Having your chimney attended to quickly can help to stop smoke and fire spreading if there were a fire.

When indoors, be chimney safe by:

- Only burning suitable fuels and not overloading the grate, or building the fire too high.
- Always keep or store your log basket, wood, paper and other flammable items away from the chimney. Too close and they can catch fire!
- Check for soot marks around the top of the fireplace/mantlepiece which indicate that smoke is not being drawn efficiently up the chimney.
- Always use a fire guard – if you have children or pets, use a safety fireguard.
- Making sure the fire is out before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Not drying or airing clothes on a fireguard or close to the fire.

Don't forget to check in the loft . . .

- Regularly check for smoke from defective brickwork in the loft when the fire is alight and avoid storing items too close to the chimney stack.
- Make sure no sparks or fumes can escape through cracks in the mortar or broken bricks.
- Never interrupt the air supply by blocking air vents or air bricks.
- Avoid too much clutter being stored in your loft as this will make it much easier for a chimney fire to spread.

If you spot any problems with your chimney, do not use it and call a professional as soon as possible.

Remember:

have working *smoke alarms fitted on every floor of your home* and test them regularly.

- Be aware of the *risks of carbon monoxide poisoning*.

How will I know if my chimney is on fire?

- A roaring sound that grows louder as the fire's intensity increases.
- Loud cracking, popping or a low rumbling noise coming from your chimney.
- Embers falling back into the hearth.
- Black smoke, sparks and flames seen coming from the top of the chimney.
- In severe chimney fires flames can extend several feet above a chimney.
- The walls of the chimney breast or adjacent walls becoming hot to touch.

If you think your chimney is on fire call the *fire service on 999*.

- Leave the room, close the door and make sure everyone in the property knows there is a fire.
- If it's a log burner or stove close the vents and flue dampers if possible, to restrict the oxygen feeding the fire.
- Get outside through the quickest and easiest escape route.
- Stay out until the fire and rescue service arrive.
- If you can't get out of the building, stay low to the ground and near a window. Calling out for help will alert firefighters to know where you are.

Please also check for dust and cobwebs in your fire alarms. They can build up quickly over time, so it's worth regularly checking, even if your fire alarm is currently valid.

A message from one of our Neighbourhood Watch members who is a fireman.

If you use a log burner or open fire, now's a good time to get your annual chimney sweep booked to stay safe and compliant with your home insurance. You can check prices, availability and book in a couple of minutes by giving him a call on 07957182784 or by viewing the website <https://www.safedraft.co.uk>.



Road safety issues – speeding

Community Speedwatch – Making Roads Safer.

Kent Police runs Community Speedwatch, a volunteer-led initiative focused on reducing speeding and improving safety.

What is Speedwatch?

Local volunteers, trained by Kent Police, monitor speeds at approved sites (20, 30, or 40 mph zones) using certified equipment.

Details of speeding vehicles are securely logged for 12 months. Repeat or excessive offenders may receive advisory letters and in some cases, personal visits from officers.

Important:

Speedwatch is educational, not enforcement. No fines or penalty points are issued directly, but the data helps target police action and inform road safety improvements.

Does it work?

Yes! Over 90% of drivers recorded speeding once are not seen again within 12 months, and overall speeding reduces in communities over time.

Want to help?

If you can spare an hour a week, join us! www.kent.police.uk/speedwatch.

We would like to provide an update regarding recent road safety concerns raised through our latest Tonbridge surveys.

On Friday 13th March 2026, officers from the Community Safety Unit carried out speed checks on several roads across Tonbridge. These checks resulted in a number of positive outcomes, including educational engagements and the issuing of fixed penalties totalling six points. Two drivers were also stopped for driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence and will face significant fines and penalty points.

We continue to encourage residents to report any information relating to illegal or improper use of e-bikes or motorcycles in the area. Public information remains vital in helping us address dangerous driving.

If you ever experience an issue or have information regarding an incident, please report it using our online reporting tools at <https://www.kent.police.uk>, speak to an operator in our Force Communications Room via our online web chat or call the non-emergency number 101.

Thanks go to the Community Safety Unit at Tonbridge for this item.



Taking Care of your handbag and briefcase

Please do remember when you are out to make sure your handbags and maybe your briefcases are not left unattended. There are thieves about who wait for someone to pop to the bar or the toilet and leave their items hanging / or resting on the chair. The thieves will just walk past and hook it off the chair and walk off with it hidden under their coat.

Please secure your bag with a table hook or put your foot through the long strap to keep it safe. Some people have little bells fixed onto the hand bag so if it is moved the bells will tinkle to warn that someone may be trying to take it away.

If you are with a group of friends maybe you could give it to a friend and ask them to firmly hold on to it until you come back.

Better to be safe than sorry.

Report Fraud

Action Fraud has now changed its name to Report Fraud, it is the place to report cyber crime and fraud.

When you click onto their site, report.fraud.police.uk, you can make a report, tell them what has happened and they will report it to the police. If you live in Scotland please report via 101.

You can find out how to protect yourself from different types of cyber crime and fraud on this website.

Get Help and Support.

If you have been affected by cyber crime or fraud they are there to listen and to help and support you. There is a victim support number to call 0808 168 9111. I did when I had a fraudulent call and they were very helpful.

If you are a Business or a Charity or an organisation under a cyber attack call 0300 123 2040 immediately.

Take care, be Alert.

Editor.

Protect Your Phone

If your mobile phone is stolen, it is bad enough that it is expensive to replace, but there's also hassle of losing stored information such as numbers, messages, pictures and downloads.

Keep an eye out for those around you – if you are chatting on your phone remember to be aware of what's going on around you.

Don't walk and text!

Don't leave your phone on tables in pubs and restaurants.

Avoid using your phone near a tube or train station or when getting on or off a bus. Wait until you are further away from the stop or station.

Always ask yourself "Is it safe to get my phone out now".

Remember never advertise your phone to thieves, keep it hidden.

Register, Report, Reunite

Register your mobile phone for free at <http://www.immobilise.com>. This will allow the police to return your phone to you if it is gets stolen and is later recovered. You can also register your phone details with your network.

If your phone is lost or stolen, report it immediately to the police and to your own network so they can block it. This will make it useless to the thief.

For help reporting it to your network you can call Immobilise helpline on: 08701 123 123.

We are cracking down on mobilephone thieves. This means we are more likely to recover your phone if it is stolen. If we do, and you have registered your phone, we can reunite you with your phone.

ICE

Please carry some form of ID when you are out and about as you never know when this may be needed. If you have a mobile phone, you can insert a telephone number in your contacts list under the heading ICE which stands for In Case of an Emergency.

If needed the emergency services can find this and will call your friends or relations who may be worrying about your whereabouts.

Example: ICE, Husband 01732 XXXXXX.

If you are on any medication, please have details of this with you as it can be very helpful to the emergency services if they know what medication you are taking.



Teach Your Child to Dial 999 in an Emergency?

It is important that children know how to dial 999 in emergencies.

Perhaps let them practice on a dead or toy phone, so as not to actually call the emergency services at that stage.

Advise them to speak calmly and to give the operator details of what has happened, they will also be asked for their name and address. It is a good idea to check that your child knows their full address.

It is a good thing that a child knows what to do especially if a relative falls ill and is unconscious in the house.

The operator will talk to the child until the emergency services arrive.



If Urgent Help is Needed . . .

If you or someone you know needs urgent help but is in fear of being heard by the person they are frightened of or they are in a situation where they need the police but feel they can't talk out loud for fear of being heard, they can dial 999 and add 55.

This will let the emergency operator know that someone is in need of help but may not be able to communicate with them.

In most cases the police may be able to track the callers telephone number and trace their whereabouts. BUT it may not always be possible to track all mobile phone numbers and their location.

If that is the case please do all you can to find a friend or neighbour that you trust to help you to be free from the situation you find yourself in.

The Tonbridge Town Centre Team would like to remind people that E-Scooters should not be used in a public place. If officers come across one and can stop the scooter it will be seized.

West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee would like to wish all our members a very Happy Easter



Welcome

We would like to welcome Brenda Homewood and Matthew Childs, from Fant and Oakwood area, near Maidstone onto our Committee. They run a very successful Neighbourhood Watch scheme and we look forward to working with them.

Julie ed.

Congratulations

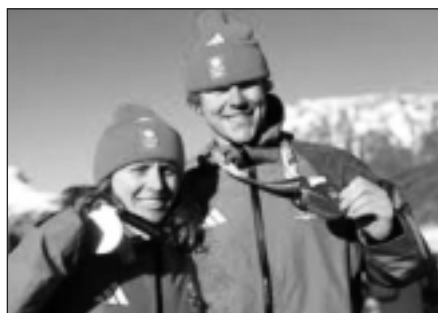
Our congratulations go to MATT WESTON and TABITHA STOECKER for winning gold medals at the Winter Olympics in Italy for Team GB. 2 Golds for Matt and a Gold for Tabitha. Amazing!

I think everyone watching these events would have been on the edge of their seats, it was so exciting to see them hurtling down the skeleton run at such a great speed.

Well done to both of them, they certainly did us proud.



Huw Nightingale and Charlotte Banks won the first ever gold medal for GB in the mixed team snowboard cross. Congratulations to them. Great results all round.



Who's Who On The Executive Committee?

*Peter Rolington, Chairman.
e-mail: peter.rolington@gmail.com*

*Julie Walker, Editor – Tel: 01732 771075
e-mail: julie.walker@kent.police.uk.*

Marguerite Bernard, Treasurer

*Jenny Woodgate.
e-mail: jenny.woodgate2@gmail.com*

*Steve Abrahams Tonbridge.
e-mail: abrahs@yahoo.co.U.K.*

*Cllr Laura Manston Sevenoaks.
e-mail: cllr.manston@sevenoaks.gov.U.K.*

*Brenda Homewood, Fant and Oakwood.
e-mail: brenda@homewood-web.com*

*Matthew Childs, Fant and Oakwood.
e-mail: mdc 8758@gmail.com*

Committee members

*Pria Webster, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, for Kent Police.
e-mail: pria.webster@kent.police.uk.*

*Samual Brookes, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, for Kent Police.
e-mail: Samual.Brookes@kent.police.U.K.*

Other Useful Numbers

*Tonbridge & Malling Crime Reduction Unit
– Tel: 01732 844522*

*Tunbridge Wells Crime Reduction Unit
– Tel: 01892 526121*

Kent Trading Standards – Tel: 03454 040506

*Sevenoaks Community Safety Partnership
– Tel: 01732 227000
community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk.*

*Tonbridge & Malling Community Safety Partnership
– Tel: 01732 844522 csp@tmbc.gov.uk.*

*Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership
– Tel: 01892 526121
communitysafety@tunbridgewells.gov.uk.*

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Text 61016 to report non-emergency incidents on trains or on the tube.

Dial 0800 405040 to give more information. A 999 call is guaranteed a quick response. For Crimestoppers dial 0800 555 111.

e-watch.co

There have been problems recently with members not receiving e-watch's twice weekly reports. If you are experiencing problems receiving e-watch updates, please remember that past issues can be found on the e-watch.co website at: <https://www.e-watch.co>.

Make a note

**When contacting the Police in West Kent
Emergency only 999**

Kent Police 101

**Is for reporting non-urgent crime, suspicious incidents
or to contact your Neighbourhood Policing Team.
Calls to both these numbers are free.**