**Neighbourhood Watch Network**

**Into the Future**

On the 4th July I attended the launch of a set of Crime and Vulnerability Toolkits that are accessible from a page on the National Neighbourhood Watch Web Site. This was a full day, seminar like, event held at Browns in St Martins Lane, Covent Garden.

The day was well attended by about forty-five NhW coordinators representing schemes from Greater London and beyond. In my case Colchester District in the North of Essex.

The CEO of the Neighbourhood Watch Network, John Hayward-Cripps and David Huse OBE, Chairman of NhWN, introduced the day and the agenda.

The morning session focussed on a new vision for NhW and a strategy for change. All the presentations, both morning and afternoon, were delivered well and in the morning sessions, members of the audience were given plenty of opportunity to comment and participate in discussion. Copious notes were recorded on flip charts during these discussions and we were encouraged to submit written comments as well. What was on the flip charts wasn’t reviewed.

The afternoon session offered a choice of two out of three workshops (really just presentations) on the following subjects:

* Domestic Abuse, presented by Diana Nammi of Women’s Aid;
* Counter Terrorism, presented by Bob Wahl of the Police Transformation Unit;
* Serious Crime, presented by Patrick Green of the Ben Kinsella Trust.

In the afternoon, I chose the sessions on Counter Terrorism and Serious Crime.

Counter Terrorism was very factual and quantitative. I came away from this session feeling grateful that we are being looked after by Anti-Terrorism Professionals.

Serious Crime on the other hand was very hard-hitting and primarily based on a video about the circumstances of the murder of Ben Kinsella. I came away very much saddened that any young person feels it necessary to carry a knife and worse, to use it.

Only in the last half hour of the day did it become apparent that these sessions were strongly tied in to the toolsets. Perhaps I missed something but I did spend a part of the day wondering when the toolsets were going to be revealed.

Before attending we were sent some pre-reading about the above-mentioned Vision and Strategy.

Here are the words from that pre-reading document which I have annotated with personal observations about the content. I stress ‘personal observations’ although several attendees voiced similar observations or concerns. Some observations were very supportive but one wonders if that was from a sense of relief that the observer hadn’t had to produce this themselves.

**Neighbourhood Watch Network**

**Into the Future**

**2018 – 2021 Strategy (Draft)**

**Our message to you**

We live in unpredictable and ever-changing times. The pace of change is faster now than at any time in our past whether this is in relation to public services, technology, communication, our working or home lives, and of course to crime. We were founded on the premise of bringing people together as neighbours and communities to help prevent crime and all the evidence suggests that the need for this today is as great as it has ever been. Neighbourhood Watch is a powerful organisation with upwards of 2.3 million members and a brand that is recognised by 94% of people in England and Wales. The overarching aim of this 3 Year Strategy is to build on the history, strength and size of Neighbourhood Watch and to re-invigorate the charity into an even more relevant and more diverse organisation.

Our Vision:

‘Our vision is a society where neighbours come together to create safer, stronger and active communities.’

Our Mission:

‘Our mission is to reduce and prevent crime by enabling individuals and communities to connect and work together.’

Our Values:

In all our work and relationships we will be relevant, accountable and inclusive.

## **I wrote a comment to the effect that charitable status appeared to me to be of benefit only at the top level of the organisation. Just as an example, the price NhW Schemes have to pay for Street Signs with cable ties has risen over the last few years from about £5.00 to nearer £7.00. To enjoy VAT savings at the grass roots level would make a big difference to what we can achieve with our limited budgets. Otherwise no issues with the above text but there is much more to come.**

## **CBS comments: Yes it is true that National Neighbourhood Watch being a registered Charity has not benefitted any County Association and we as ECNWA addressed this by becoming a registered charity ourselves ( Harlow was already registered) so that all fourteen districts can benefit in Essex. To be exempt from VAT would create a lot of work for the Treasurer so we all agreed to leave that issue.**

**3 Year Strategy (2018 – 2021) – Into the Future**

What is very clear from consultation with our members and key stakeholders, was that we have not always been relevant enough to be able to meet the challenges of our changing society and that we need to adapt and adapt quickly.

This three-year strategy will address this. Over the next 18 months we will focus solely on the actions that will make us relevant. The next 18 months we will take this work on the strategy and use it to help expand our offering across other parts of England & Wales to include new members and supporters from new geographies and demographics.

The strategy has 3 strategic aims each of which is underpinned by specific objectives:

1. Provide a great service to Neighbourhood Watch members – by supporting and developing the existing schemes.
2. Show leadership – by attracting new members and schemes and engaging them in Neighbourhood Watch campaigns.
3. Extend our reach – by developing focused work to develop Neighbourhood Watch in areas of high crime or deprivation.

## **I took it to mean that to “focus solely on actions that will make us relevant” is a statement about the National Organisation and not the Schemes that, on the whole, enjoy great success without the help of the umbrella organisation.**

## **CBS comment: WE always need some “service” from National Neighbourhood Watch eg Members Guides, Window stickers and other issues when they arise.**

## **I don’t believe the National Organisation should have any kind of interface with members other than to seek their advice through those who administer the districts in which the members live.**

## **I’m a firm believer that the further up the organisation you go, the more the role is about providing the wherewithal for those below to do their job. I’m very much against the National Organisation trying to attract new members other than by providing material and funds to enable district and scheme coordinators to do this.**

## **Local knowledge is key to starting and growing schemes in any locality and within reason autonomy is what lets this happen.**

## **Typically I have found that high crime and areas of deprivation are the most difficult areas in which to find volunteers to run NhW Schemes. In some areas services other than NhW might be more effective. Clinics run by local Councillors, a Mobile Citizens Advice service are just two possibilities.**

**CBS comment: I totally agree with GS on the first paragraph and we would not allow National Neighbourhood Watch to have any “interface” with our database ( and never will-in fact I have told them so many times). So I think we should wait to see what they are asking us to do .**

**We are very well thought of by them and I do not see any “serious” issues with them over such matters.**

1. **Provide a great service to Neighbourhood Watch members – by supporting and developing the existing schemes**

**Objectives:**

1. Review our current IT systems to develop easy sign up and good communication platforms for our members, the public and our partners – **Please no to ‘sign up’. The current situation is bad enough and trying to determine whether or not someone should be a scheme coordinator and whether this person is a safe pair of hands can only be done locally. There is a massive task in hand to remove all those people that have been allowed to sign up as schemes or members via the NNhW Web Site.**

**CBS comment: We are expecting National Neighbourhood Watch to tidy up and improve THEIR IT not get us to sign up to their systems .**

1. Develop relevant and high-quality toolkits for members and associations to support their work in developing safer, stronger and active communities – *Yes please* ***OK***
2. Share good practice from around the Neighbourhood Watch network, enabling members to act as a resource and champion for quality, inclusion and learning - *Yes please* ***OK***
3. Clearly define the roles of the National Support Team and Associations and develop a clear National Offer and an accredited standard guide for Associations - *Yes please* ***OK***
4. Enable Associations to fundraise by developing good practice guidelines holding seminars and webinars.

## **Unlikely to happen when you consider that many volunteers have jobs, families and other interests. When our local Chief of Police and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner set aside time to speak to our members only about six out of 2,000 members (at that time) bothered to show up. Not caused by failings in publicity I might add.**

## **CBS comment: I think we should leave them to organise their own fundraising as we have sufficient actions at all our Districts in Essex.**

##

1. **Explore the possibility of a national small grant system that associations are able to apply for - *Yes please OK***
2. **Update the Neighbourhood Watch branding to be more inclusive and representative**

***Again!***

***CBS comment: I am delighted to say that at the AGM based on MY questions as to the “face” on the logo ..we as ECNWA may change the faces to say “Colchester District” as an example if we wish but we must leave the yellow circle and wording.***

### **Design and test an impact measurement tool that can be used at a local or national level to prove the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch**

### **Yes Please. This is a priority need but will take much longer than three years to implement.**

### **CBS comment: Well I agree but we measure ourselves on our successes anyway and discuss it at our meetings.**

1. Monitor, collect evidence, and evaluate our work to ensure we meet the requirements of our funders, deliver our strategic outcomes and become a learning organisation **Becoming a learning Organisation is current ‘management speak’. Few know what it means, whether it is relevant and whether it is any different to what exists now. A learning organisation is one that encourages and facilitates the development of the skills and knowledge of its members, and transforms itself to enable this to happen so as to benefit from the skills and knowledge gained. CBS comment Let’s see what they mean by their actions?**
2. **Grow leadership – by attracting new members and schemes and engaging them in Neighbourhood Watch campaigns**

**Objectives:**

1. Test, develop and roll out a Partnership Model for Neighbourhood Watch in areas that do not have an Association or alongside existing Associations.

*Another example of where I’m unsure who is doing this. This statement suggests National NNhW has more resources than we are aware of.*

CBS comment: Lets see what they do by their actions.

1. Work in partnership with youth groups including uniformed youth groups to roll out supported youth activities supporting safer, stronger communities and crime prevention.

***Is this really possible considering how small a number of people work for the National Organisation? Is this something scheme coordinators and their members would want to engage in?* CBS comment: Well some of our Districts already have such groups..so lets see what National NW have as ideas to action this.**

1. Modernise our communications and marketing to include using social media to run targeted local and national membership recruitment campaigns.

 *Yes but directing potential members to the districts and scheme coordinators where the applicant lives.*

*CBS comment : I have already had this agreed with National NW that all enquiries are sent to us via our website or to the ECNWA email address.*

1. Develop a National Neighbourhood Watch campaign to drive forward the vision and values of Neighbourhood Watch, championing the positive experiences of ‘communities knowing their neighbours’. *Really! CBS comment: Yes we do don’t we??*
2. Develop strategic partnerships and shared campaigns with other organisation including the Police, Crimestoppers, Victim Support and Citizen’s Advice.

*This pretty much already happens. My experience has been that we are too eager to develop partnerships and when we do we realise that they are short lived and often a one-way street.*

CBS comment: When they ask us I shall say we already have agreements with Crimestoppers and Essex Police and Police Fire and Crime Commissioners Office plus more recently Victim Support!

1. **Extend our reach – by developing focused work to develop Neighbourhood Watch in areas of high crime or deprivation**

**Objectives:**

1. **Work with the police or local authorities in targeted acceleration areas to develop new Neighbourhood Watch activities and groups in non-traditional areas where no Neighbourhood Watch schemes exist.**

## **This happens in Colchester but it is a big commitment.**

## **Councillors should be charged with the responsibility of working with NhW to identify coordinators and support them and us in setting up new schemes. Some Councils have more money than they are willing to reveal and these funds could be used to provide more signs than we can afford to buy now with our funding from the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner.**

**CBS comment: When asked of us I shall ask each of you for a report on what you have been doing-we do all this anyway!**

1. Bid for funding to work independently or in partnership with other organisations to deliver local or national projects or programmes building safer and stronger communities. *Yes please*
2. Develop, test and document a number of new and innovative Neighbourhood Watch initiatives focusing on services to high crime areas or areas of deprivation. *Yes please* ***OK***

**Next Steps**

Over the next 18 months the National Support Team’s focus will primarily be on our first aim, *Supporting and developing the existing schemes.* This will enable our members to be even more self-sufficient utilising guidance, support and tools developed in partnership by the National Support Team, other Neighbourhood Watch Associations and expertise from our membership.

## **NNhW cannot possibly support and develop existing schemes. All it can do is to make sure that material, like high quality and engaging crime prevention advice, and also campaign materials, are available to coordinators and that these can be delivered in different ways including social media.**

## **CBS comment: They can support and help to develop existing schemes if they supply us with what we want! eg Members Guides, Window stickers etc…**

To achieve the first aim and objectives, we will:

* Review the National Support Team to ensure we have the right mix of skills and experience to deliver the strategy;
* Create member-led volunteer teams to support meeting the objectives and ensure work is relevant to our members;
* Develop and implement a clear communications and marketing plan;
* Diversify and increase our income sources by applying an income generation strategy focused on fundraising, grants and sponsorship (both new and existing).

After 18 months the focus will move to our second and third aims, attracting new members, developing campaigns and delivering focussed work in areas of high crime or deprivation.

## **My belief is that what appears above as goals, products and outcomes, cannot all be achieved in three years. I believe that some of it should be set aside, possibly as much as one third, by dint of being unnecessary or unachievable.**

## **CBS let us get on with what we do so well and then if approached by National NW we can update them**

I will now turn my attention to the afternoon sessions and the thirty-minute presentation we had on the toolsets that, for me, were the main reason that I wanted to attend. Before I do that I will mention that there were many references to OWL (Online Watch Link), this being the product that was rejected in favour of what we now know as the Essex Community Messaging system (ECM). One comment was that Essex had “bought cheap and got nasty”.

District coordinators and scheme coordinators were interested in how what we were going to learn, and later learned about the toolsets, would integrate with OWL and it became apparent that very large numbers of Police Forces, NhW Schemes and NHW Members are embracing OWL and making a success of its use. Where I was thinking in terms of Email, Facebook and Twitter, many other attendees were simply thinking OWL.

**The Crime and Vulnerability Toolkits**

I have paraphrased National’s goal for the toolkits in the following two paragraphs.

Crime in England and Wales is changing and National NhW is providing new practical information, and help, for members to support the police in the detection and reduction of crimes that cause significant harm to victims and communities.

This seminar was in part aiming to build a group of local NhW Champions – who will share their knowledge in their local area so even more people can get the important information they need and act as a local resource to other coordinators and members of their community. This may simply mean sharing the information contained within the toolkits, developing a local focus on one or more of the areas or running a local project if they or local coordinators want to.

The Neighbourhood Watch Network developed the Crime and Vulnerability Toolkits after members asked for more practical ways members can be empowered to learn about some of the crimes that cause such significant harm to victims and communities.

To access the toolkits it is first necessary to log in to the Our Watch Web site use the following link - <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/>

Go to the top right hand corner and from the drop down menu, select ‘Crime Prevention Toolkits’. This reveals a set of ‘buttons’ that look like this.

Clicking each one in turn reveals a set of ‘subject headings’. For example, for Modern Slavery (the one in the middle) the subject headings are:

* Modern Slavery;
* What’s being done?
* Spotting the signs;
* Types of modern slavery;
* Modern slavery campaign toolkit.

Each of these headings will take you to text and graphics pertaining to that particular subject. For example, selecting Modern Slavery takes you to a very comprehensive treatment of the subject supported by up-to-date statistics and a presentation of the myths.

At the end of this section, there is a link to a toolkit that NhW Schemes can use to inform and educate members about the whole gamut of Modern Slavery. Using the words on the web site, the resources include:

* Printable resources such as leaflets that you can print off and put through people’s letterboxes, or forward to them via email;
* Online materials such as campaign websites, videos and info’ graphics that you can forward to people by email or share on social media such as your Neighbourhood Watch Facebook group or other App;
* A PowerPoint presentation you can use to hold a public meeting to educate people and raise awareness about the issue;
* A template campaign action plan. You don’t need to follow this to the letter; it just provides some ideas of how you might run a multi-week campaign to raise awareness about modern slavery in your community.

What you will find is a rich source of materials, all accessible through links, which can be begged, stolen or borrowed, (forgive me) without fear of infringing copyright or somehow using something for which you do not have the necessary permission.

Here is just one of the links to a film by Michigan State Police called ‘[Look Again’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44EvOqCMrIE) which offers guidance on signs to look out for in your local neighbourhood. It’s aimed mainly at tradespeople visiting people’s homes but is equally effective as a Neighbourhood Watch resource.

Do try the link by clicking on the blue text above. To use this film as a resource all you need to do is communicate the link by email or Twitter to your members and invite them to “Click Here –“ to watch the video. Incidentally, the video is accessed via You Tube.

What the authors of this toolkit have done (and it applies to the other six subjects as well) is to amass a plethora of materials about each one and make these accessible and usable in just about any way that you might choose. This really must have been an extremely time consuming endeavour and the team are to be congratulated on the end result.

I mentioned earlier that the two presentations I attended were Terrorism and Serious Crime. Here are some examples of the resources available on the web site and for each of these subjects. Much of it is quite hard hitting but not all. It may take a while to download some of these files as they can be quite large. Click away!

* [Terrorism Powerpoint Presentation](https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Terrorism-Presentation-1.pptx)
* [Communities Defeating Terrorism](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6SjX2ZXMnY)
* [No Knives, Better Lives](http://noknivesbetterlives.com/young-people/the-consequences/dont-be-in-the-dark#video)
* [The Conversation: Knives and Young People](https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/THE-CONVERSATION-KNIVES-AND-YOUNG-PEOPLE.pdf)

When you have watched these films or read the last one which is a link to a .pdf file, please do go into the start point and navigate your way around. It isn’t that difficult but if you are unused to accessing material from web sites I’m sure you will soon get the hang of it. The authors have made it as simple as it’s going to get.

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Note – any opinions and suggestions expressed above are my own and will not necessarily find favour with everyone reading what I have written.