

Neighbourhood Watch is about people coming together to look out for one another and making our communities safer and more pleasant places to live and work.

We also aim to promote neighbourliness and community cohesion by helping people feel safe and looking out for our neighbours.

Given the last 12 months, I truly believe that the above represents a reflection of what Neighbourhood Watch is about. The COVID Pandemic has and continues to be something the whole world has never seen for many years other than the two great wars. There have been many tragedies associated with the virus with many loved ones taken from us and our heartfelt sympathy goes out to everyone affected. The current vaccination process will hopefully bring with it a great deal of protection and hope that we are able to get back to some form of normality in the not too distant future.

The past 12 months has also brought about a community spirit that we know existed following Storm Desmond with many communities throughout Cumbria better prepared to help and assist the most vulnerable, isolated and in need. Neighbourhood Watch has played a part in this work alongside many other partner organisations, something I am very proud of. The Community Emergency/Flood Groups have contributed immensely to the work being done around the county with volunteers coming forward to help and support communities. As a result I was able to provide Neighbourhood Watch Network with a resume of examples of the work being done in each part of the county that was shared nationally and showed Cumbria as an area of good practice.

I think it also goes with saying that the work of the NHS has been fantastic and incredible, likewise our Emergency Services and front line staff from a wealth of organisations who have continued providing services to all of us during the most difficult of times and continue to do so as we speak. Everyone who represent these services deserve our grateful thanks and respect. In addition, we have seen an incredible response from volunteers from all walks of life coming forward and playing a hugely significant part in helping people overcome the daily difficulties that the pandemic throws up. To all these volunteers, NHS Staff and front line staff I'm sure you will join me in offering our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to them all.

Back to basics and with this in mind I would like to highlight the ongoing work with community engagement with each of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams that allows Neighbourhood Watch to have a voice at the monthly Local Focus Hub meetings. Since our last AGM in November 2019, the response from members has been incredible with information being fed into the Local Focus Hubs on a monthly basis about real issues that affect neighbourhoods. The use of Cumbria Community Messaging (CCM) to achieve this work is but yet another means by which the public can access the Police and other partner organisations with many examples of success that it brings and long may it continue.

As I mentioned in my last AGM report, we entered into a partnership working arrangement with Cumbria Victim Support and Crimestoppers to help and support victims of crime including domestic abuse. This relationship, alongside Ring.Com, has produced yet more incredible results with 60 or so victims being provided with a video doorbell that provides an element of reassurance and safety that hadn't previously existed. We have many accolades from victims and Victim Support that support this work, likewise each of the Community Safety Partnerships who have also invested funding to provide more video doorbells in the future. This work has proved so successful that we await news that Cumbria will be included in a national scheme around this very issue, more of which will be revealed in the near future.

We have worked with Ring.com for quite some time now, during which they have provided Video Doorbells at specially reduced rates for members of Neighbourhood Watch. This

equipment, when fitted to a front door, allows the householder to watch over their home in crystal clear video and see, hear and speak to visitors and allows the householder to answer the door from their smartphone, tablet and PC.

In addition, these Video Doorbells have previously been made available to Neighbourhood Watch members at a 20% cost reduction which some of you made good use of as an excellent crime prevention method. With this in mind, I am hoping to secure a similar discount in the near future. Watch this space.

Neighbourhood Watch Network (NWN), our national body, consists of a team of really enthusiastic, professional and dedicated people who have provided excellent support for some time. There is a wealth of experience that we are able to 'tap into' on a daily basis and a website that contains a huge amount of information that you will find useful and something worthwhile looking at whenever you get a minute. I would like to use this opportunity to thank John Hayward-Cripps, CEO of NWN for all the help and assistance he and his team have provided to Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch.

Because of the COVID Pandemic, we were unable to organise our AGM last year, however, it has now been arranged in a new format, 'On-line'. Not sure if many people are aware but a great deal of business and meetings are now conducted 'On-line' using 'Zoom' amongst other methods, anywhere and everywhere. I will remind everyone about the AGM as we approach 8 February and hope you will support us by your attendance. If I can use Zoom, I know anyone can so please join us for about an hour or so

Chief Constable Michelle Skeer QPM, Lorraine Smyth, Chief Executive, ACTION with Communities in Cumbria, our Police & Crime Commissioner, Peter McCall and Cumbria High Sheriff, Julie Barton have agreed to join us for the AGM and will talk about their role and issues during the past 12 months or so.

Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association has provided examples of good work that goes on throughout the county so that others around the country can use to good effect and good practice. There is still much to do in the future, in particular around rural crime and I am determined that we can play a significant part, working with a range of different partners to good effect to make a difference. None of this work can be done without your help and with this in mind I hope you will join me and my team in developing ways and means by which we can be successful, together.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity of thanking everyone for their time and patience and look forward to a time in the near future when we can get back to some form of normality. With this in mind, I also look forward to getting out around the county to meet as many people as is possible to increase membership and interest in Neighbourhood Watch.

Joe Murray QPM
Chair and Trustee of CNWA