

Why Speedwatch?

There appears to be a general misconception of what Speedwatch really is there for, not only amongst the public at large but also amongst police officers and now apparently, some ex-police officers.

Firstly, and most importantly, Speedwatch is **NOT** there to **REPLACE** the (scarce) Police, but it is there to assist them focus their scarce enforcement resources on the right place at the right time.

I doubt that anyone would deny that, were the Police to send an enforcement van or a constable with a laser gun to cover every complaint about speeding that they get in the St Ives & District Sector, they would need to double (at least) the existing number of camera vans, laser guns and trained constables the cost of which undoubtedly would fall on the Council Tax payer, and I am sure no one is advocating that.

So, the symbiotic process that has evolved with the advent of Speedwatch over the last 18 months is:

Step 1. A member of the public makes a complain about speeding to the Police on 0345 4564564.

Step 2. The Neighbourhood Police Inspector with responsibility for the Sector's Speedwatch team, informs the Area Speedwatch Coordinator (we have one in Ramsey and one in St Ives).

Step 3. The Area Coordinator establishes the exact location, time and direction of the speeding and mounts an initial batch of 6 Session with small variations to location, time and direction as 'intelligence' improves. From these sessions, advisement letters are sent out to the speeders by the Police and a significant percentage heed the 'warning shot across the bows' and keep their speed down. Unfortunately, a hardcore don't and that's when they do not only themselves, but their neighbours a great disservice because, after Speedwatch comes Enforcement and that is brought about in 2 (maybe 3) distinct ways:

Method 1. The home address Post Code for every speeder as well as the location Post Code for every session is fed into the 'system' so that Police Enforcement 'intelligence' is updated and when those post codes 'cluster' to the trigger level that has been set, the camera van or a constable with a laser gun is deployed to the cluster area and enforcement takes place. Unfortunately, it might be the speeder's neighbours that take the brunt of his/her speeding habit by bringing the Enforcement Team to his/her + their doorstep (not something to brag about in the local pub or paper).

Method 2. In full consultation with the Area Speedwatch Coordinator, the Sector Inspector deploys a Constable with a Laser Gun with the Speedwatch Team 2-3 times a month for 1-2 hrs at a time. This is a new initiative and the first of these combined sessions was reported with photographs in the St Ives News and Crier on 15 April 10 where 4 speeders were issued FPNs of £60 and 3 points. Future combined sessions are planned for Hilton, Earith and several locations in St Ives town such as Houghton Road and Ramsey Road.

Method 3. Sector Commanders currently cannot influence where or when Camera Vans are deployed. However, in response to public demand, there is currently a Speedwatch proposal/initiative afoot to place a Camera Van (and crew) 2-3 times a month for 2 hrs at a time at the disposal of the Sector Commander to enforce in those areas where using, a Laser Gun (when the vehicle has to be stopped and the FPN issued there and then) is too dangerous to carry out or the vehicles speeding are just too numerous to be practicable for this type of enforcement method.

I hope this clears up the role of Speedwatch whose fact finding activities - using unpaid volunteers - saves £££ in Council Tax both by not using Police officers as pathfinders but then ensuring when Police resources are needed they are put to the best and most effective use possible. What's wrong with that? It gets my vote but constructive criticism as well as alternative cost-effective ways of tackling the speeding problem, are always welcome as are more volunteers to try to do some good in our community.

Signed: A Proud Do-Gooder