

Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Association

Week ending 30th May 2021

Cheshire News & Appeals



Latest Cheshire News

Young truck enthusiast helps support HGV Operation in Cheshire

Officers from Cheshire Constabulary this week enlisted the support of an eight-year-old truck enthusiast to help highlight their latest road safety operation.

Alfie Simcox, from Shavington, is well known in the trucking world and can often be found at service stations and on motorway bridges taking photographs of trucks for his Facebook page. On Wednesday 26 May, Alfie was invited to Sandbach Service Station to find out more about Operation Tramline. Operation Tramline forms part of Cheshire Constabulary's ongoing efforts to improve road safety, which sees an unmarked HGV patrolling motorways and main roads across the county to identify any offences being committed by drivers. At the event Alfie met the officers involved in the operation and was also given a guided tour of one of the three HGV cabs that will be used. He was also given the opportunity to take some unique pictures of the vehicle to share with his thousands of followers on Facebook.

Sergeant Andy Griffiths from Motorcycle Roads Crime Unit said: *"I was great such an enthusiastic young boy and I truly believe that Alfie has got a fantastic future ahead of him. I was very impressed by his knowledge of trucks and his passion for trucks and hope he enjoyed his trip out with all the officers. I first heard about Alfie following a feature Granada Reports last year and as soon as I heard his story I knew he would be an ideal candidate to be involved in Operation Tramline here in Cheshire. While the majority of drivers adhere to the rule of the road, sadly there are some who believe that they can get away with breaking the law, which is why it's essential that we get the message out there that this is not the case. Alfie already has more than 14,500 followers on his Facebook page, so hopefully by Alfie sharing some of the pictures of the Operation Tramline HGV will help act as a warning for any drivers planning to use the Cheshire road network."*



Alfie launched his Facebook page in May 2020 after taking pictures of trucks on his mum's mobile phone during the initial lockdown. Since then he has posted more than 50,000 images. The eight-year-old inherited his love for trucks from his dad and grandad – both of whom are professional truck drivers.

Alfie's mum Stephanie said: *"Trucking is in Alfie's blood and I have no doubt that he will follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. While he's not quite old enough for his own licence yet, he goes out trucking with his dad on a regular basis and he's often telling me about things he sees while sat in the cab – which often involve drivers doing things that they should be doing. I hope that by Alfie supporting this operation and sharing some of the pictures, it will help get the message across to other drivers to make the roads safer for when Alfie is eventually allowed out in a truck of his own."*

As well as his Facebook page, Alfie also has his own charity calendar which he launched after he was targeted by online trolls. Since launching the calendar he has already raised more than £4,000 for the children's mental health charity Young Minds.



The Operation Tramline HGVs are this week taking part in Operation Vertebrae, a Week of Action by Highways England running along the length of the M6 until Sunday.

Highways England's Assistant Regional Safety Co-ordinator Maria Biddulph said *"It is wonderful to see Alfie's enthusiasm for trucks, he's still a little young to get behind the wheel himself but in the meantime by sharing pictures of our HGV cabs Alfie is helping spread safe driving messages to drivers up and down the country."*

Man sentenced after assaulting paramedics

A man who spat at paramedics who were trying to treat him has been handed a rehabilitation order.

Bradley Smith appeared at Liverpool Crown Court on Thursday 20 June where he was ordered to undertake a 60 day community rehabilitation order. The 24-year-old must also serve a four month curfew and undertake alcohol abstinence and monitoring for 120 days. Smith, of Buckton Street, Warrington, had earlier pleaded guilty to two counts of assaulting an emergency services worker. The charges relate to an incident which occurred on Saturday 20 June 2020 when Smith absconded from Warrington District General Hospital. Due to concerns for his welfare the hospital reported his disappearance to Cheshire Police and asked for officers to attend to help locate him.

Smith was subsequently found nearby on Lovely Lane. As officers and paramedics attempted to place him into the back of an ambulance he became aggressive. He went on to spit at one of the paramedics, before punching him and biting him in the rib area. The attack caused the paramedic to sustain soft tissue damage to his right hand which meant he was unable to work for two weeks. Following the initial attack, officers were able to restrain Smith and he was placed into the back of the ambulance. However, he then went on to cough in the face of a second paramedic who was attempting to treat him, before spitting on his uniform. Smith was subsequently taken to hospital to be treated before later being charged with two counts of assaulting an emergency services worker.

Following his sentencing, PC Cadman, said: *“Throughout the coronavirus pandemic paramedics have gone above and beyond in their role to support some of the most vulnerable residents in our community. They have put their own lives at risk in order to protect others and they don’t go to work in order to be assaulted. The actions taken by Smith that day are totally unacceptable, to bite, cough, punch and spit at people who are trying to help you is indefensible and I welcome the sentence handed to him.”*

Criminals targeted in county lines week of action

Criminals linked to county lines have been targeted during a week of action in Cheshire.

The seven-day operation highlighted the work that officers are doing every day to stop criminals in their tracks and to rid the county of illegal drugs. From the Local Policing Units and Roads & Crime Unit to the Serious and Organised Crime Unit and intelligence teams – everyone is committed to working together to make Cheshire a no-go area for criminals. The week of action, which took place from Monday 14 May, was part of a national focus on county lines drug activity co-ordinated by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC). A county line is operated by an organised crime group (OCG) who use a mobile phone, known as a line or a graft to extend their criminal activity business into new locations – usually from a city into rural locations.

During the week officers in Cheshire arrested 10 men and 4 women on suspicion of drug offences and executed a number of warrants which resulted in heroin, cannabis and cocaine being seized. At least 28 people who were identified as victims of cuckooing were visited by police and provided with specialist support and advice. Cuckooing is a term used to describe gangs who take over a vulnerable person’s home to use as a drugs den. Officers also engaged with 26 vulnerable adults and children who could have been targeted or exploited by organised crime gangs.

Crewe, Macclesfield, Warrington and Chester Local Policing Units worked with officers from British Transport Police (BTP) to target those using the railway to transfer drugs into the area and to identify anyone who may have been exploited to carry out this activity. Meanwhile officers from across the county interacted with children at local schools and colleges raising awareness of county lines and the risk of exploitation. Teachers

were also advised on how to spot the signs of a pupil at risk of exploitation. There were also cross border operations with neighbouring forces.

Chief Superintendent Gareth Lee said: *“Targeting those suspected of being involved in serious and organised crime, specifically county lines, is something we do relentlessly on a regular basis. The week of action enabled officers to go that extra mile by informing the public of what we’re doing and how they too can look out for signs of children and adults who are vulnerable to organised criminals and report it. Throughout the week we carried out a range of activity including disrupting gangs by making arrests and seizing drugs, but we also had a big focus on identifying and engaging with people whose homes are being taken over by drug dealers. It is these victims who are at the centre of county lines and can often be forgotten which is why we give talks in schools, speak to residents in our communities and visit businesses to raise awareness.”*

John Dwyer, PCC for Cheshire, said: *“Preventing and protecting Cheshire’s communities from serious and organised crime is a key focus for me and I will make sure it continues to be a priority for the force. I was pleased to join Chief Constable Mark Roberts during the week of action which demonstrated the work officers do day in day out to protect our communities and vulnerable adults and children from organised crime gangs. I hope this work has reassured residents that officers out there are keeping you safe and stopping criminals in their tracks – not just for a week, but daily and nightly.”*

To learn how to spot the signs of drug activity taking place in your community or children and vulnerable adults being exploited by organised crime groups please [visit our county lines page](#). To report serious and organised crime please call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or Cheshire Police on 101.

Officer with spinal injury cycles 140 miles in aid of other people with mental health problems

A Winsford-based officer has completed a daunting charity challenge to help other people with mental health problems.

PC Neil Jones, of Cheshire Constabulary’s Initial Investigation Team, cycled 140 miles in aid of a mental health charity on Saturday 22 May despite being hampered by the effects of a spinal injury he sustained in the line of duty. The 41-year-old was joined by other officers, friends and members of three Cheshire-based cycling clubs for The Thin Blue Loop. Starting and finishing at Cheshire Constabulary’s headquarters in Winsford, they cycled between 18 police stations in the county to raise money for, and awareness of, Mind, the mental health and well-being charity.



PC Neil Jones, second from right, with some of the other riders



PC Neil Jones, centre, during the charity cycling challenge

PC Jones, a dad-of-two who has been unable to work on the frontline since his spine was injured when his police car was rammed by a stolen van in January 2019, said: *“I am delighted to have completed the exhausting charity challenge...with a little help from my friends. The original intention was for just fellow PC Lee Spencer and I to do the challenge. He is a good friend from my time working in Cheshire’s Roads and Crime Unit and he had helped me train for The Thin Blue Loop. However, other friends, colleagues and members of the Cheshire, Cheshire Maverick and Tatton Velo cycling clubs ended up doing the challenge alongside us. They heard about what we were doing and wanted to support us. Twelve of us completed the challenge from start to finish, and at one point there were 16 of us taking part. It was fantastic having so much support on what was a long day of cycling. We willed each other on, and the group really helped me to complete the challenge. We did it in around 13-and-a-half hours, with a few stops along the way. It was the most tiring thing I have ever done. It pushed me to the limit and I practically slept for two straight days afterwards, but all the training beforehand and the effort on the day itself was well worth it. I set up a JustGiving page for the challenge and set myself the target of raising £3,687 for Mind, the mental health charity. That is a figure which is personal to me and my career at Cheshire Constabulary. I am thrilled to say that not only has that target been reached, it has been surpassed. The amount raised so far is more than £4,200.”*

Mind, the mental health charity has been offering information and advice to people with mental health problems and lobbying the Government and local authorities on their behalf for more than 70 years.

PC Jones added: *“The charity is close to my heart. I have had mental health problems, which cause invisible barriers that you have to overcome, for a long period of my life. I have been able to control the issues with treatments and medications after they were identified more than four years ago, but my mental health demons resurfaced after I was injured at work and forced to have an extended period of sickness leave. I was left needing to fight both a physical and a mental battle, trying to come to terms with the fact that I am unlikely to return to my full duties ever again. The injuries and subsequent condition, radiculopathy, has left me with reduced control and function of my left limbs, preventing me from continuing with my original sporting love, running, as impactful sports are no longer possible. Cycling was recommended as a method of rehabilitation and reasonable exercise, and I find that it gives me the freedom of space and time. It enables*

me to blow the physical and mental cobwebs away, allowing fresh thoughts, clarity and reason. I came up with the idea of The Thin Blue Loop during one of my rides and would like to thank everyone who helped me complete it and raise so much money to aid others with mental health issues. To all those who have made a donation, I can't thank you enough."

Donations are still being accepted via the JustGiving page. To make a donation go online at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/thethinblueloop>.

Unique messaging to spot signs of online grooming

TikTok dance challenge with hidden message shows how easy it is to miss the signs of online grooming.

To mark International Missing Children's Day, AMBER Alert Europe, non-governmental organisations in the field of child protection and law enforcement officers from around the globe involve influencers in the fight against online grooming with a cryptic TikTok dance challenge. A seemingly ordinary TikTok dance challenge was launched by various well-known influencers around the globe. Now, it is revealed that this viral dance challenge was in fact staged to educate teenagers on the signs of online grooming.

The challenge kicks off a global prevention campaign, #CheckBeforeYouChat, by missing children's foundation AMBER Alert Europe that brought together NGOs, law enforcement officers and influencers worldwide to fight the alarming increase in online grooming cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused social isolation, leading to an alarming increase in online grooming cases. Online grooming is when an adult befriends children online and builds their trust, often leading to sexual abuse, both online and in-person. Earlier this month, the song "Love Birds", secretly containing the five stages of online grooming in its lyrics, was officially released on TikTok (an app very popular among young people) along with a choreographed dance which interpreted the song into a 5-step dance challenge. With the help of well-known dancers on the TikTok circuit, the 5-step dance challenge was replicated by thousands of unsuspecting TikTokers worldwide.

Chief Constable of Cheshire Police Mark Roberts said: *"We support this innovative approach to interacting with young people. We need to use every avenue available to highlight the signs to look out for, and often these can be extremely subtle, to help protect them from online grooming. Having the opportunity to participate in this international approach, with the support of dancers and influencers popular with young people, is a particularly relevant means of communicating this important message."*

Right before International Missing Children's Day, which serves as a symbolic kick-off date, the second part of the campaign was set in motion. This time, dancers and campaign partners posted videos of themselves standing still and revealing the true meaning behind the TikTok challenge.

"Even though the signs were right in front of them, they still didn't notice what was going on", says Frank Hoen, Chairman and Founder of AMBER Alert Europe. "This is exactly what happens with online grooming. Often the signs remain unnoticed until it's too late. We want to make sure children are aware of the fact that online not everything is what it seems and they should be wary of who they communicate with on social media, apps or games. Always #CheckBeforeYouChat."

Ricardo Wolff, Executive Creative Director at INNOCEAN BERLIN, says *"When we were approached by AMBER Alert Europe to address this hideous army of online groomers (approximately 750.000 daily), it was clear that*

another PSA campaign wouldn't do it. We needed to let people experience how easy it is to be fooled by groomers. And that's how we came up with "Love Birds". A TikTok hit that actually serves as a trojan horse to AMBER Alert Europe's mission: educating kids and parents about online grooming and how to protect themselves."

DS Zoe Bowden, Missing Persons and Child Exploitation Manager and Coordinator for Cheshire Police, said: *"Protection of children is a priority for Cheshire Police. We are very aware that online groomers use different methods and platforms to take advantage and exploit some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Having the opportunity to get involved in this exciting campaign has given us the chance to raise the awareness in a new and exciting way that people will understand. We would urge everyone to know and see the signs of online grooming and exploitation and be a voice for those who may not be able to speak up for themselves. There is a specific Cheshire-wide campaign, of which we are a partner alongside other child protection agencies and the www.knowandsee.co.uk partnership website has a wealth of information as well as an indication of the signs to look out for."*

John Dwyer, PCC for Cheshire, added: *"I am delighted that the Constabulary is supporting this unique and innovative initiative. So many young people spend a lot of time online which makes them extremely vulnerable to exploitation by these means. We need to make use of all the channels at our disposal to spread the word about child grooming, how it can happen and what signs to look out for."*

For more information about the campaign, please visit: <https://www.checkbeforeyouchat.com/>

Police urge Warrington shoppers to be vigilant following spate of purse thefts

Police are urging shoppers in Warrington to be vigilant following a spate of purse thefts in the town.

There have been at least three incidents where purses have been stolen from bags unbeknown to the victim. On all occasions, the victims were out shopping in the town centre. Officers are reminding the public to be wary of the dangers and are offering some top tips on how to best protect people from falling victim to this kind of crime.

DC Neil Orford said: *"As we seen a return to the high street with more businesses opening up there is sadly going to be a rise in opportunistic thieves who will stop at nothing to make criminal gains. All the victims were targeted in shops and have no idea how their purses were stolen from them. Enquiries in relation to the incidents are ongoing and I urge anyone with any information regarding purse thefts to get in touch. I also encourage everyone, particularly the elderly, to be vigilant and to not carry around large quantities of cash. If you are out shopping and see something which doesn't look quite right, call Cheshire Police on 101 or report it to us via [the Cheshire Police website.](#)"*

Here are some top tips on how to best protect yourself:

- Walk with a sense of purpose when in or near to shops
- Carry your purse in a zipped-up bag, and always keep the bag close to you and where you can see it
- Attach an audible alarm to your purse/wallet, such as purse bells
- Never leave your bag in a shopping trolley or basket

- Make sure that you are not followed or engaged in conversation by someone who might be looking for an opportunity to steal from you

Information about purse thefts can also be passed on to independent crime charity Crimestoppers, anonymously, by calling 0800 555 111 or report it via [the Crimestoppers website](#).

Cheshire has second lowest rate of knife crime in England and Wales

The latest statistics show that Cheshire is the area with the second lowest rate of knife crime in England and Wales.

The number of knife-related offences committed in the county decreased by 27.6 per cent from the year ending in December 2019 to the year ending in December 2020. The only area with a lower rate of knife crime in that period in England and Wales is Durham in the North East of England.

Cheshire Constabulary's Chief Constable Mark Roberts said: *"Knife crime is an issue that we take extremely seriously, with our officers working day and night to protect communities and make them even safer places to live, work and visit. It is extremely good news that statistics released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that we now have a lower rate of knife crime than all areas of England and Wales bar one. Numerous other forces across the country have come to us for advice on how to effectively tackle knife crime. We are always more than happy to share details of our multi-faceted and multi-agency approach to tackling knife crime, and it also gives us the opportunity to hear about good practice at other forces. The success of our approach has seen Cheshire jump from having the ninth lowest rate of knife crime nationally in 2018 to the second lowest. This is testament to all the hard work done at the force and by our partner agencies to make Cheshire's streets safe."*

CI Sarah Heath, the force's knife crime lead, added: *"Our structured prepare, protect, pursue and prevent approach to tackling knife crime involves various partner agencies, including local authorities, education providers, health authorities, third sector organisations, youth representatives and community groups. We work together to achieve long-term change by educating young people about the dangers and futility of carrying weapons. We make sure they know that carrying a knife, even if they have no intention of using it, is a crime and can increase the likelihood of suffering an injury and having a criminal record. We also steer them away from criminality and offer them attractive alternative ways to spend their time. It is pleasing to see that this work is having the desired effect of significantly reducing the rate of knife crime in Cheshire, but we won't be resting on our laurels. Our goal is to achieve weapons-free streets throughout the county and we endeavour – through education, awareness and action – to make Cheshire an area where no-one carries a knife, or feels that there is a reason to do so. However, police forces cannot achieve that goal on their own. Knife crime is a societal problem that cannot be solved without the support of our communities. If you have any information regarding knife crimes, or those who carry weapons, please let us know. If you know someone who carries a knife, reporting it to the police could be enough to save a life."*

Retailers also have an important role to play, by helping to ensure that weapons are not falling into the wrong hands. They are urged to have robust controls on the sale of blades, such as kitchen knives. It is illegal to sell a knife to anyone under the age of 18, and anyone found carrying a knife in public, without a reasonable excuse, faces a prison sentence.

John Dwyer, PCC for Cheshire, said: *"It is really pleasing to hear that Cheshire has the second best knife crime figures in England and Wales. I would like to thank everyone involved at Cheshire Constabulary and partner agencies for all the hard work that has been done to achieve this feat. I'm committed to working with the force and our communities to make the streets of Cheshire even safer moving forward."*

To report any type of crime involving weapons, call Cheshire Constabulary on 101, or 999 in an emergency. Information can also be passed to the force online via <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/ro/report>. Anyone who knows someone that carries a knife can report it to Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously>.

Winsford drug dealer jailed as part of county lines crackdown

A man responsible for bringing class A drugs from Liverpool into Northwich and Winsford has been jailed.

Christopher Pope was arrested on Wednesday 21 April after officers taking part in a crackdown on county lines drug dealing stopped his grey Ford Focus on Northwich Road, Dutton. When being searched by officers the 38-year-old disclosed that he had drugs hidden in his buttocks. Pope was arrested at the scene on suspicion of possession with intent to supply class A drugs. Officers subsequently searched his home on Catalan Close, Winsford where they recovered more drugs from his wardrobe which were packaged up ready to sell. In total officers recovered 48 wraps of crack cocaine and 10 wraps of heroin. The drugs were believed to be valued at almost £600.

Pope was charged with two counts of possession with intent to supply class A drugs and pleaded guilty to the charges at Warrington Magistrates' Court on Friday 23 April. On Friday 21 May he appeared at Chester Crown Court where he was sentenced to two years and four months in prison.

Following his sentencing Sergeant David Christmas, of Northwich Local Policing Unit, said: *"It is clear that Pope was an established dealer who was responsible for bringing drugs from Liverpool to sell on in the Winsford and Northwich areas. Not only was he in possession of class A drugs at the time of his arrest, but he also had more drugs hidden at his home in Winsford. Thankfully, following our stop check, we have been able to seize these drugs and prevent them from being sold on our streets. While this case is now closed our crackdown on county lines remains ongoing and we will continue to do all we can to bring to justice those responsible for the sale of illegal drugs in our communities."*

CI Gary Smith, of Northwich Local Policing Unit, added: *"Illegal drugs have a hugely detrimental impact and I want to reassure residents that we are relentless in our pursuit of those involved in the supply of such drugs. As part of this fight information from the public is vital and I urge anyone with any information about suspected drug related activity in their community to get in touch. You will be listened to and we will investigate the matter."*

You can report suspected drug dealing to Cheshire Constabulary directly by calling 101 or giving the details online via <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/ro/report>.

Man charged in connection with offences in Chorley and Cholmondley

A man from Crewe has been charged with multiple offences including burglary, robbery and theft.

Andrew Graham was arrested at around 7.30pm on Saturday 22 May after stopped a silver Citroen C4 on Nantwich Road near to Reaseheath College. The 28-year-old has since been charged with burglary, robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, failing to provide a breath sample, dangerous driving, driving without a licence, driving without insurance, handling stolen goods, receiving stolen goods and two counts of vehicle interference. Graham, of Partridge Close, Crewe, has been remanded in police custody and is set to appear Chester Magistrates Court on Monday 24 May. The burglary and vehicle theft charges relate to incidents in Chorley. The charges regarding vehicle interference relate to incidents in Cholmondeley and Chorley. A 28-year-old woman from Crewe was also arrested during the incident, she has since been released under investigation pending further enquiries.

Latest Cheshire Appeals

CCTV image released following assault outside Winsford pub

Detectives investigating an assault outside a pub in Winsford have released a CCTV image of a man they want to speak to in connection with the incident.

The incident occurred outside the Old Star public house on Swanlow Lane at shortly before midnight on Saturday 8 May. The victim, a 24-year-old man from Winsford, was punched in the face by an unknown man and suffered a serious facial injury. He was taken to hospital following the incident and has since been discharged. Enquiries in relation to the incident have been ongoing for a number of weeks and officers believe that the man in the CCTV image may have vital information to aid their investigation. They are urging anyone who recognises him or thinks they may know who he is to get in touch.



DC Stevie Jackson, of Northwich CID, said: *“We believe that the man in the CCTV image may have important information to help with our ongoing investigation into a serious assault in the town centre. The victim suffered a serious facial injury and we are committed to doing all we can to establish exactly what took place. If you think you recognise the man in the CCTV image or know who he is please call Cheshire Constabulary on 101, quoting IML 983445, give us the details via <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/> or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. I would also like to appeal directly to the man in the CCTV image to get in touch so that we can progress with our enquiries.”*

CCTV footage released following burglary at Warrington bar

Officers investigating a burglary in Warrington town centre have released CCTV footage of the offender.

<https://youtu.be/uEmSvDLNwHw>

A man broke into PJ's Bar & Club in Bridge Street shortly before 3am on Sunday 23 May. He stole a quantity of cash before fleeing in the direction of Wilson Patten Street shortly before 4am. Enquiries in relation to the incident are ongoing and officers want to hear from anyone who believes they may know who the offender in the CCTV footage is.

PC Stephen Kemp, of Warrington Local Policing Unit, said: *"We are determined to establish the identity of the man who carried out the burglary and make him face the consequences of his actions. Enquiries are ongoing and I urge anyone who believes they may know who the man in the CCTV footage is to get in touch. He has his hood up over his head and you can't see him clearly in the footage but we are hoping that someone may recognise him from his build, the way he walks and the clothes he was wearing. We are also appealing for anyone who was in the area that night and believes that they may have seen the offender, or have other CCTV footage or dashcam footage of him."*

Anyone with information or footage that may help the investigation is asked to call Cheshire Constabulary on 101, quoting IML 994915, or [give the details via our website](#). Alternatively, information can be reported to Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or [via the Crimestoppers website](#).

Appeal following catalytic converter thefts in Handforth and Warrington

Officers investigating catalytic converter thefts in Handforth and Warrington are appealing for information from members of the public.

Three men wearing dark clothing and face masks stole a catalytic converter from a black Toyota car parked at Handforth Dean Retail Park in Handforth, near Wimslow. The offenders fled in a dark blue Honda Civic. The incident occurred at around 12 noon on Monday 24 May. The following day, catalytic converters were stolen from two Toyota cars parked at Bents home and garden centre on Warrington Road in Glazebury, Warrington. The victims became aware of the thefts when they returned to their cars at about 3.20pm. The thieves are believed to have been travelling in a dark blue Honda Civic and the incidents in Handforth and Warrington are believed to be linked. Enquiries in relation to them are ongoing and officers are urging anyone with any information or footage that may aid their investigation to come forward.

Inspector Andy Baker said: *"I would like to reassure members of the public that we are doing everything we can to establish who stole the catalytic converters and make them face the consequences of their actions. As part of our ongoing enquiries we want to speak to anyone who was in the Handforth Dean Retail Park car park at around 12 noon on Monday 24 May or the Bents home and garden centre car park in Warrington before 3.20pm the following afternoon and witnessed anything suspicious. It takes specialist tools to remove catalytic converters from vehicles. If you saw, or have dashcam footage of, anyone acting suspiciously in the car parks please get in touch. The same goes for anyone who believes that they may know who stole the catalytic converters or have information or footage regarding the dark blue Honda Civic that the offenders are believed to have been travelling in."*

Anyone with any information or footage that may help the investigation should call Cheshire Constabulary on 101, quoting IML 995641 (Handforth) or 996512 (Warrington), give the details via <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/ro/report> or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Catalytic converter thefts have been on the rise across the country in recent times, due to the precious metal they contain. There are a number of steps that motorists can take to reduce their chances of becoming a victim, including:

- Protect your car by asking your dealer if they can give you any advice on locks or guards that are approved by the vehicle manufacturer and tested to Sold Secure Gold
- If you can, park your car in a locked garage when it is unattended – otherwise, park as close to your property as possible or in a well-lit area clearly covered by CCTV

- Try to park so that the catalytic convertor cannot be easily reached, close to a wall, a fence or tightly between other cars for example
- If you are using a car park, use a 'Park Mark' one to ensure that it has been assessed and approved for security
- Consider installing a Thatcham approved alarm to your car – ones that activate if your vehicle is lifted or tilted are particularly effective
- Mark your catalytic converter with a forensic marker and register your converter to make it harder for thieves to dispose of it
- If your converter is bolted on, the bolts can be welded shut – this would not stop a determined thief but would slow them down.

Appeal for information following incident in Warrington

Officers are appealing for information following an incident in Warrington.

At around 10pm on Monday 24 May three separate people were walking along Bewsey Road when they sustained minor injuries. It is believed the injuries were caused by a pellet-type weapon. Police quickly attended the scene and made a search of the area but found no trace of the offenders. Now officers are asking anyone who may have information that could help with their investigation to come forward.

Sergeant Mark Spaven said: *“Although the investigation is in its early stages, a number of enquiries are underway and I would like to reassure the public that we are doing all we can to find those responsible and bring them to justice. As part of our enquiries, we have been looking at nearby CCTV but are keen to hear from anyone who may have witnessed the incident or perhaps was driving in the area around the time and has caught dashcam footage of the offenders. The same goes to anyone who may have information on who is responsible. We take reports such as this extremely seriously and it is very lucky that the victims sustained only minor injuries. If you have any information, no matter how big or small, please contact us via 101.”*

Anyone with information is asked to call Cheshire Police on 101 quoting IML 996091 or report it via [the Cheshire Police website](#). Alternatively information can be passed to independent crime charity Crimestoppers, anonymously, by calling 0800 555 111 or report it via [the Crimestoppers website](#).

Police appeal for witnesses after shop robbery in Birchwood

Police are appealing for witnesses following a robbery at a shop in Birchwood, Warrington.

At around 10am on Monday 24 May a man entered the Locking Stumps Nisa Store and threatened staff with a knife demanding cash. He then poured coins from the till into the bottom of his jumper and ran off. The suspect is described as white, in his early 20s, around 5ft 4ins tall and of medium build. He was wearing a grey hooded top with a long-sleeved black top underneath, dark blue bottoms, white or cream gloves and black and white trainers.

DC Cameron Mackay said: *“While no one was injured, it still left staff shocked by their ordeal and we are making a number of enquiries to locate the suspect. If you have CCTV or dash cam footage or any information that may help our investigation I’d urge you to get in touch.”*

Anyone with information should contact Cheshire Police on 101 or via the website quoting IML 995549. Alternatively information can be given anonymously by contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Man arrested following incident at Ellesmere Port takeaway

Detectives from Cheshire Police have arrested a man on suspicion of firearms offences following an incident at a takeaway in Ellesmere Port.

At 8pm on Sunday 23 May officers were called to reports that a woman and a man had been threatened at a takeaway on Whetstone Way, in Great Sutton. Following enquiries local officers, supported by the armed policing alliance, attended an address on Grace Road, Ellesmere Port, at 9.30pm and arrested a 31-year-old man. The man was arrested on suspicion of possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear or harm. He is currently in police custody being questioned by officers. Enquiries in relation to the incident remain ongoing and as part of the investigation officers are appealing to identify a second woman who was believed to have been present at the time threats were made.

DS Damian Tierney said: *"This investigation is in the early stages and we are working hard to establish exactly what took place. While we have already spoken to a number of witnesses, I am keen to speak to a woman who is also believed to have been in the takeaway at the time the incident occurred. I would ask the woman, or anyone else with any information which may aid our investigation, to contact the tam here at Ellesmere Port on 101 quoting IML 995234."*

Information can also be reported online at www.cheshire.police.uk/tua or anonymously, via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

To find out further information about the Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Association, to log into your account or for Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Literature please visit our website: <http://cheshire.ourwatch.org.uk/>