



Case Histories

- 001 New device aims to combat rising fear of crime
- 002 Welsh Valleys look to technology to tackle social problems
- 003 Rebuilding a city centre community
- 004 One man and his electronic watchdog
- 005 Haringey Council goes on the alert

CASE HISTORY



Date:	8 TH JUNE 2004	Ref:	UK-001
Title:	New device aims to combat rising fear of crime		
Subject:	Product launch		

Tel: 0870 240 1970 www.alertbox.co.uk

Local authorities and crime prevention groups within the UK public sector are being offered a new approach to community security – the first electronic version of the Neighbourhood Watch concept.

The 'AlertBox' device is a robust box – about the size of a paperback book – which allows neighbours to send each other simple messages of warning or requests for help. Run on mains electricity or batteries, it is operated by pressing a single button – ideal for the elderly or those nervous of technology.

The new security product, which has been welcomed by Neighbourhood Watch and the police, makes ingenious, secure use of state-of-the-art radio technologies to connect neighbours on an AlertBox 'network' instantly, should there be a problem or concern in their local area. It is ideal as a community-wide solution – as each person must have their own AlertBox – and it ties in with a renewed vigour in the public sector to offer neighbourhood solutions.

Useful as a crime prevention device, as neighbours can alert each other to nuisance callers or suspicious individuals in the vicinity, it also has the potential to save lives. In the event of needing to dial 999 because of an accident, fire, illness or intrusion, the ability to summon a neighbour could make all the difference in the time it takes for the emergency services to arrive.

A number of police forces, housing associations and local councils are already assessing the device as a means of combating not only crime itself but also the paralysing and often disproportionate fear of crime, which is crippling communities.

The London Borough of Barnet is running a three-month trial with elderly and vulnerable people. Paul Hammond, director of Boroughwatch – an independent charitable organisation that sits in the local Partnership – is coordinating the scheme on behalf of Barnet.

"The public is suffering from a loss of confidence, which is helping criminals," said Hammond. "Giving people a sense of empowerment by harnessing the latest

technologies is a great step forward to creating more secure neighbourhoods – both practically and psychologically.

“Our number one aim is to reduce the fear of crime and we feel confident that AlertBox will be a useful tool to help us achieve that. While we must wait until the end of the three month trial to give our final assessment, AlertBox has already been used successfully in action to alert the community to some worrying noise and disturbance by some youths.”

The launch of AlertBox to the public sector follows a Home Office report on crime in the UK ¹ which showed that the fear of crime is far worse than the fact. While the report showed that the crime rate had actually dropped 17 per cent since 1999, most people (73 per cent) perceived it to be rising.

Nigel Davies, marketing director, Neighbourhood Watch, said: “We’re all for the development of products such as AlertBox. Anything that helps neighbourhoods become more actively connected will help to engender closer, safer, more peaceful communities. Some Neighbourhood Watch groups are trialling AlertBox at the moment and the National Neighbourhood Watch Association looks forward to seeing how it is received by our members.”

Peter Harris, managing director, AlertBox said: “AlertBox – like Neighbourhood Watch itself – is not an alternative to emergency services, but it does offer valuable back-up and peace of mind. Knowing that all you have to do is press one button to alert your neighbours to a nuisance caller or suspicious person or to call for help, is something that vulnerable people, such as the elderly or those who live alone, will really value.”

AlertBox has been designed specifically to be incredibly simple to use. Each box is pre-programmed with the user’s details, so there is no set-up to be done. A clear display shows exactly who a message is from and when it was sent and the user has a choice of two buttons – warning or help. Once pressed, the message will go out to all AlertBoxes in the neighbourhood within an effective range of around 100 metres. The user has the option of sending more detailed messages if desired, but this is not necessary for the AlertBox to work efficiently.

AlertBox-networked communities will also benefit from eye-catching posters and stickers, which will work as a deterrent to nuisances or criminals.

^[1] Home Office Statistical Bulletin: ‘Crime in England and Wales’, published July 2003. Further information available at: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm

CASE HISTORY



Date:	31 st August 2004	Ref:	UK-002
Title:	Welsh valleys look to technology to tackle social problems		
Subject:	Innovative uses for AlertBox		

Tel: 0870 240 1970 www.alertbox.co.uk

A school in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales, is using an innovative new safety device to protect a child whose parent has threatened to snatch the youngster on their release from prison.

An 'AlertBox' has been installed in the child's classroom, which is radio-linked to another in the secretary's office. Should the teacher be at all concerned, she can press a button on the box discreetly, which will immediately transmit a 'help' message to the secretary.

A high-tech version of Neighbourhood Watch, AlertBox is a robust box – about the size of a paperback book – which allows neighbours or members of a community such as a school or other institution, to send each other simple messages of warning or requests for help. Run on mains electricity or batteries and using ingenious, secure state-of-the-art digital radio technology, it is operated by pressing a single button.

The boxes are completely portable and will work within a radius of about 100 metres so a teacher also carries one in the playground at breaktime.

The new 'AlertBoxes' have been supplied to the school by the local Community Safety Partnership, which has adopted the newly launched technology as part of its armoury against anti-social and criminal behaviour.

One of the first local authorities to trial the AlertBoxes, which have been described as 'Neighbourhood Watch in a box', Rhondda Cynon Taf has also placed two devices in a local Magistrate's Court. One AlertBox has been given to Victim Support, which links to another office in the building. Victims giving evidence in a trial are vulnerable to harassment – or worse – and can even be threatened within the Magistrate's building.

Tony Key, OBE, Community Safety Officer, Rhondda Cynon Taf said: "We had a situation where there was one woman Victim Support Officer in a remote room without a phone, making her feel very vulnerable. The AlertBox means she just has to press one button to summon assistance.

A surgery in Cynon Valley is also benefiting from the trial. The medical staff there deals regularly with patients with drug and alcohol abuse problems, who can sometimes become threatening and violent.

Area Crime Watch co-ordinator, Carl Harris, who is one of only three full-time staff employed by a Community Safety Partnership in Wales, says that alcohol is the biggest social problem the area faces.

"We put an AlertBox behind the front desk at the surgery and one in each consulting room. If a patient starts to get aggressive, usually the appearance of a couple more people will calm the situation down," explained Harris, a retired company sergeant major with the British Army.

Roger Hughes, another Area Crime Watch co-ordinator for Rhondda Cynon Taf, who retired from police work in 2002, said: "The beauty of these new AlertBoxes is that they can help prevent a crime before it happens. It also gives important reassurance to residents and gives them that 'feel safe factor' that just allows them to sleep well at night.

As Crime Watch co-ordinators, Harris and Hughes are responsible for encouraging and helping to resource local Neighbourhood Watch groups. In one year alone, the team has increased the number of Neighbourhood Watch groups in the area by 94 per cent, covering 31,500 homes and 70,000 people.

"This is an area that has experienced a lot of deprivation. From once being an incredibly close-knit community, which was almost self-policing, we now have fear of crime at night," said Hughes. "However, the situation is improving tremendously as we work to get that community feeling back into the area."

"We have given a couple of trial AlertBoxes to a very active Neighbourhood Watch group run by ladies who are mostly aged over 70. They run a small community centre backing on to a park, which gets quite a lot of 'youth activity'. Anyone using the centre, who is worried by noises outside perhaps, can summon help from a neighbour by pressing the red button on the AlertBox. It makes them feel much more secure."

Tony Key said: "AlertBoxes are particularly useful for areas such as Rhondda Cynon Taf where residences are spread over wide and often rugged areas. Because AlertBox links neighbours together using reliable digital radio technology, help can be summoned from close by to assist or even stop the situation. Much of our task is about reassuring the community and AlertBox is a valuable piece of that picture."

CASE HISTORY



Date:	1 st September 2004	Ref:	UK-003
Title:	Rebuilding a city centre community		
Subject:	Plymstock, Devon		

Tel: 0870 240 1970 www.alertbox.co.uk

The Broadway has seen several improvements as a result of an overarching campaign set up by the Centre Manager, Mr Smith to help both retailers and residents. The 'Lookout Campaign' launched Broadway's inclusion in the Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC) initiative where known offenders are barred from retail locations. It also saw the introduction of Neighbourhood Watch to the area and the trial of new security technologies. Retailers have been testing walkie-talkies and six residents have been testing the AlertBox devices.

"We looked at CCTV but the cost of installation and running equated to hundreds of thousands of pounds," said Mr Smith. "Compared to that, AlertBoxes, which use the eyes and ears of residents and accurately record when an alarm was raised, are much more affordable. At the same time they give people the feeling they are able to do something positive themselves to fight crime without putting themselves at risk."

Sandra Calvert, Active Communities Co-ordinator, employed by Devon & Cornwall Constabulary and a National Neighbourhood Watch Trustee, was responsible for introducing Neighbourhood Watch as part of the 'Lookout Campaign'. She says it is the joint action of the community and the multi-agency approach, which has set the scene for the successful trial of the AlertBox technology.

"In talking to the residents, it's clear they feel there is a place for the AlertBoxes in the community and have found them very useful," said Mrs Calvert. "Importantly, they appear to be reducing the fear of crime."

"Now, because the whole community is working together and we've made it really public that this is happening, it's made a real difference. Residents are no longer afraid to report things as they can do so quite covertly. They're working quietly alongside the police, who are taking steps to identify the real offenders – rather than just kids making a noise."

“The really big difference is that, before, people didn’t know their next-door neighbours – but now they’re talking to each other.”

The AlertBox device is a robust box about the size of a paperback book, which allows neighbours to send each other simple messages of warning or requests for help. Run on mains electricity or batteries, it is operated by pressing a single button – ideal for the elderly or those nervous of technology.

Useful as a crime-prevention device, as neighbours can alert each other to nuisance callers or suspicious individuals in the vicinity, AlertBox also has the potential to save lives. When a 999 call is necessary because of an accident, fire, illness or an intruder, AlertBox can simultaneously summon a neighbour – making full use of the precious minutes before the emergency services arrive.

AlertBox-networked communities also benefit from eye-catching posters and stickers, which will work as a deterrent to troublemakers or criminals.

CASE HISTORY



Date:	21 st September 2004	Ref:	UK-004
Title:	One man and his electronic watchdog		
Subject:	AlertBox in use for rural businesses		

Tel: 0870 240 1970 www.alertbox.co.uk

A Chew Valley farming family which has been using traditional farming methods for the past 400 years is trialling cutting-edge technology in a bid to provide better security for the farm.

After falling victim to a gang of robbers that specifically targets isolated farmhouses, farmer Colston Gay from New Manor Farm in West Harptree decided to take action to provide better security for the farm. He has now installed digital radio AlertBoxes, which broadcast warning or help messages.

Set in acres of stunning, peaceful countryside, the traditional agricultural and livestock farm is the last place where one could imagine criminals in action. However, the farm buildings, including the house the family lives in, are quite isolated and potentially vulnerable.

Colston's one brush with the criminal element was in fact a lucky escape. The gang, over the course of a couple of weeks, had already broken into around 10 farmhouses before they tried New Manor Farm – in some cases making off with valuable antique furniture including a dining room table! One night, unable to sleep, Colston went downstairs at around 4.00am – and fortunately disturbed the robbers before they could do any damage.

His close shave prompted Colston to have an alarm system installed, but going by the old adage 'prevention is better than cure', he felt some kind of early warning system would be even better. This was particularly important for the commercial buildings on the farm. Colston is one of a growing breed of farmers who sell farm produce direct to the public from an onsite farm shop. The New Manor Farm Shop, stocked with organic and fresh produce, runs successfully alongside the popular Stables tearoom some yards from the shop. With the public milling around the shop, tearoom and farmyard, Colston felt a greater degree of vigilance was needed to spot potential 'bad lots'. Accustomed to using working dogs on the farm, he was delighted to discover a type of electronic watchdog, which could be used to raise the alert should there be a potential problem.

The new AlertBoxes, which have been dubbed 'neighbourhood watch in a box', are electronic boxes about the size of a paperback book, which use encrypted digital radio technology to communicate with each other. By pressing a single button, a help or warning message can be transmitted to all AlertBoxes within an approximate hundred-metre radius.

Colston has installed one AlertBox in the farm shop and another in the teashop. At the slightest hint of suspicious activity – Colston says you often instinctively know when you see someone who could be trouble – he or a member of his staff just needs to press a single button to summon help or alert a colleague.

"Having disturbed burglars in the house, we realised that we needed to take security more seriously," said Colston. "We alarmed the house but also wanted to put something into the shop and teashop that would give our staff peace of mind when they're working – sometimes on their own. We have a lot of female staff and they in particular feel that there's safety in numbers. The AlertBoxes are great because if one of the staff is worried about someone who looks a bit shifty, they can discreetly press a button and know that a colleague will be with them almost immediately."

In an increasingly tough commercial climate many farmers nowadays are finding the challenge of making ends meet too difficult, and choose to leave their profession. With this in mind, Colston knows that every decision he makes is vital. Like all farmers, he is extremely alert to external conditions, whether they're economic, climatic or social. This level of awareness coupled with a healthy degree of caution has so far held him in good stead. He hopes he won't have too much cause to use the AlertBoxes, but he says: "One day they might make all the difference." Presumably this perspicacious streak runs in the family – for around 400 years or so.

CASE HISTORY

	Date:	19 TH OCTOBER 2004	Ref:	UK-005
	Title:	Haringey Council goes on the alert		
	Subject:	North London traders get networked		
Tel: 0870 240 1970 www.alertbox.co.uk				

Haringey Council is sending criminals and troublemakers in Tottenham a clear 'not wanted' message by installing the first large-scale public trial of a recently launched electronic version of the neighbourhood watch concept.

Digital radio AlertBoxes have been distributed to around 100 independent traders around the Tottenham High Road as part of a crime-busting initiative, which is designed to knit the community together and fight the fear of crime. The AlertBox network, which is being widely publicised, is expected to deter criminal activity and reassure businesses as it enables them to call for immediate help from their neighbours or alert them to suspicious activity.

Haringey Council set up The Business Watch Scheme with funding from the London Development Agency and Haringey Council's City Growth Strategy. The funds were used to purchase nearly 100 AlertBoxes, which link traders together on a secure digital radio network. The devices are used to alert neighbouring traders of trouble in the area – for instance gangs of youths creating a disturbance or shoplifting. The boxes can also be used to summon assistance should a shopkeeper have a problem.

The introduction of AlertBoxes to the area sits alongside a number of other initiatives within the Business Watch scheme: Haringey Council has also introduced a Radio Link System, till guards, and is helping to foster closer links between traders and beat police. The overall objective of the programme is to bring the community closer together and to get different groups working harmoniously towards a common end.

Collette Makambila, Regeneration Officer, Haringey Council, said: "We have a broad mix of businesses and cultures within the Tottenham High Road and it's important to get everyone communicating and supporting each other. One helpful warning message from a neighbour you haven't spoken to before is really all it takes to get a dialogue going."

Tony Azille, Regeneration Officer, Haringey Council said: "The project is very encouraging. I am constantly amazed at how resilient the business owners are at coping with the high crime rates in their area so it's particularly rewarding to give them tools to help curtail the activities of the criminal element".

The Council plans to measure the success of the pilot scheme by monitoring its impact on petty crime figures. Anecdotally however, the project already seems to have had considerable impact. One trader said that since the AlertBoxes were introduced, there has been no trouble in the street. Both the retailers and the Council attribute this to the deterrent effect of the boxes. Highly visible signage in the form of window stickers warns of the presence of the new technology. The Council is also looking at advertising the AlertBoxes' presence on posters and in the press.

Mick Mulhern, Regeneration Officer, Haringey Council said: "Long-term we'll see how the scheme works out but hopefully we'll be able to introduce a rental system where more traders will be able to join the AlertBox network for a nominal cost."

Despina Johnson, Tottenham High Road Strategic manager, Haringey Council said: "The AlertBox initiative is an example of how good partnerships deliver robust crime prevention schemes. This partnership has consisted of the businesses, Met Police and Haringey Council. The success of this scheme has encouraged us to build on the relationships established to find more ways to reduce crime and the fear of crime."