

# THE WILTSHIRE BOBBY VAN TRUST NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2026

## Fraud expert joins SSO team

FORMER police officer Rachel Davies is bringing almost 25 years of crime-fighting and community policing skills to our Stay Safe Online (SSO) team.

Her appointment comes as cybercrime continues to surge in Wiltshire, accounting for almost one in every two crimes investigated by Wiltshire Police.

After spending the last four years of her career with Wiltshire Police's fraud team Rachel has become the charity's SSO Referral Lead and Manager Support, working with SSO Manager Toni Evans to lead the team of 11 SSO volunteers.

"The Bobby Van has always been part of the policing family and having the opportunity to be able to carry the knowledge and experience that I've



**Rachel Davis, second right, with DCI Debbie Hatch, left, Toni Evans and Jennie Shaw**

gained into a charity working so closely with Wiltshire Police was a no brainer," she says.

Rachel's appointment has been welcomed by Detective Chief Inspector Debbie Hatch, who leads Wiltshire Police's Fraud, Digital Intelligence and

Investigation Unit. "She's a true asset and it's phenomenal that she's taken her skill set and knowledge to the Bobby Van," she says.

Director Jennie Shaw adds: "I'm absolutely delighted she has decided to join us."

## Mayor chooses Bobby Van as yearly charity

Royal Wootton Bassett Mayor Steve Bucknell has chosen the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust as one of his charities for his mayoral year.

Cllr Bucknell, who has donned the mayoral robes for the third time, is organising events and promoting the Bobby Van throughout his year.

"When I was thinking about which causes to choose my wife Allison reminded me how much we

like the Bobby Van and when I thought about it, it ticked so many boxes – safer communities especially."

Director Jennie Shaw said: "We are delighted and very thankful to Steve for choosing us. It's a great honour to be a mayoral charity and it is wonderful that we will receive a higher profile because of Steve's generosity."



## Date set for Middlewick

Tickets are on sale and already selling quickly for the Middlewick House Open Garden on June 6 and 7.

The hugely popular fundraiser is hosted by Nick and Annette Mason and features hundreds of classic supercars, including Nick's own priceless collection of classic Ferraris.

This year admission is by advance ticket only to help manage traffic at the event site.

Tickets are available [here](#).

Stay up to date with news, events and more

Online at [wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk](http://wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk)

Follow us on Facebook at [Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust](#)



## Mick retires after 18 years of dedication

Stalwart operator Mick Leighfield has hung up his toolkit and retired after 18 years' sterling service.

After travelling thousands of miles in his van, the former Wiltshire Police officer stepped down in August – exactly 52 years after he first walked into Devizes headquarters as a Police Cadet.

He joined WBVT in 2007 after overhearing a conversation at work about the need for a Bobby Van operator. "I had an interview on the Tuesday and accepted it on the Wednesday, so within a week everything changed," he said.

The satisfaction from helping terrified and anxious people feel safe has kept him in the role for so long. "I like talking to people and I think you need patience, understanding and kindness in this job," he said.

"The good thing is the feeling when you go home that you've helped somebody that day. Changing a lock for somebody is just a little thing really but the difference it can make to their lives is huge. You see that in them almost instantly as you do it."

"The difference between the frightened and anxious person you meet at the door to the one who lets you out at the end of the job can be tangible."

Read more about Mick's life and career [here](#).

# Susanna grins and bears it



For a second year in a row we made an appearance on BBC1's daytime show *Crimewatch Live*.

This time Susanna Thorpe was in the studio with presenters Steph McGovern and Rav Wilding.

She spoke about our work in general but in particular about trauma teddies, which are handed to children we find in distressing situations, such as car accidents or domestic abuse cases.

She told the programme: "We have to thank Wiltshire Police volunteer, Hazel, who for over a year now has been hand knitting these wonderful trauma teddies. They are very colourful, as you can see, and they act as morale boosters.

"They've been in officers' cars when they've been dealing with a road traffic collision or a domestic violence case, it brings a child a feeling of security."

## Scott's relishing his new role

Grenadier Guard Scott Roughley says 30 years' service in the jungles of Borneo and the heat of the desert means he is able to adapt to any challenge as a Wiltshire Bobby Van operator.

He joined the charity after service all over the world while rising to the rank of Captain and says although he is used to reacting to any situation, he wasn't prepared for how much job satisfaction his new role would bring.

"I loved my time in the Guards and I still miss it but I didn't realise how much I would enjoy this, I absolutely love it," he said.

"There's no greater feeling than going to someone's house when they've been a victim of crime and walking away afterwards, knowing you've made them feel secure."

Scott, originally from Manchester, settled in Wiltshire when he left the army in 2023. One of his last postings was as a staff



**New Bobby Van operator Scott Roughley**

officer in Warminster. He joined Wiltshire Police's control room staff and heard about the Bobby Van when referring victims of crime to the charity.

"I really liked the sound of what they did but I never thought there'd be a vacancy because everyone I spoke to who worked there really liked it," he said.

"So I was really fortunate when this role came up and now I'm part of a great team."

An added benefit of the job is getting to see more of

the county. "I've been to parts of the county I've never been to and there are some beautiful little hamlets and villages," said Scott, who is training to be a master locksmith.

"I love little churches and I normally find an old church to look round.

"There are so many War Commission graves and it's amazing to see not just British soldiers and airmen, but Germans and Polish as well."

**Read more about Scott and his career [here](#).**

## Great year of fundraising

The past year has been a busy one for fundraising.

Thanks to the generosity of venue owners and donors and the hard work of volunteers, staff and trustees, we've been able to generate around £220,000 to help keep people safe in their homes.

As we embark on our fundraising calendar for 2026, we still need volunteers to help run them.

We are also keen for anyone with some time to spare to help us with the collection boxes we have around the county.

We are looking for help with looking for new places to place our boxes by connecting with organisations and businesses and maintaining an accurate list of where they are placed.

Our collection box helpers also collect and replace our boxes at regular intervals and generally act as our ambassadors in the community. If you are interested in finding out more, email [susanna@wbvt.org](mailto:susanna@wbvt.org).

## The right note

A wonderful evening of music raised almost £40,000 for our funds.

Concert pianist Rupert Egerton-Smith performed magnificently at a dinner held at Hillbrush.

Our grateful thanks to trustees Emily Tulloch for organising and our Chair Philip Coward for hosting the evening.

## Welcome Jennifer

Jennifer Lamacraft is an important new addition to our team. She'll be focusing on admin and HR in support of Susanna Thorpe.



# Atlantic rower rides a wave of affection

Atlantic rower John Watling thrilled an audience of more than 170 people with the tale of his epic 52-day, 3,000 mile journey in The World's Toughest Row.

John, from Lacock, was speaking at a fundraising lunch at Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort in aid of the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust and Lyme Disease UK.

John, who runs his family jewellery business in the National Trust village, said he was inspired to take on the challenge by a customer who had completed it. His daughter Yasmin, 26, was ill with long-term Lyme Disease after being bitten by a tick, and he saw it as a way of raising funds for the charity, as well as challenging himself.

"I had never even run a half marathon before but I thought to myself 'I've got to do this,'" he said. "I was just a skinny jeweller from Wiltshire but it set me off on a three year journey."

He signed up for the race and began three years of gym work and running, gaining 11kg



John Watling thrilling his Bowood audience

in the process, while training with his three crewmates in Team Seasoor.

The challenge is a gruelling ocean trek from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to English Harbour, Antigua. Crews of one to five rowers battle extreme conditions, testing endurance and teamwork.

[Read more here](#).

## Campaign rings 150<sup>th</sup> bell

Our digital doorbell campaign has hit a milestone after the 150th free or low cost doorbell was fitted this month.

The campaign has been boosted by a £475 donation from Devizes Rotary Club. Another 11 bells have been funded by parish councils, says Bobby Van operator Vincent Logue.

"We are installing 15 funded by Selwood housing and we have supplied 15 free and another 12 at 50 per cent off," he said. "We reduced the price to £95, which is £4.99 cheaper than retail price. We install it and show clients how to use them. If they have Alexa speakers, we can link the doorbells to them."

[Find out more about our doorbell campaign here](#).



**COVENTRY**  
Building Society



**Ray Harris Charitable Trust**

**Poppydown Quilters**  
Patchwork group in Swindon

**JHT**  
THE JOHN HORSEMAN  
TRUST



### Donations make a difference

We have been thankful for several wonderful donations throughout the year.

We are deeply grateful for the generous donation of £50,000 towards maintaining our services from The Golden Bottle Trust.

The John Horseman Trust donated £5,000 towards our Digital Doorbell Campaign and we received £600 from the Wayland Estates Charity.

Chippenham Lions donated £910 and Coventry Building Society's Trowbridge branch donated £1,000 to Stay Safe Online.

The Ray Harris Charitable Trust donated £1,000 and Poppydown Quilters in Swindon presented £500 raised at a sewing day.

"We thank them all from the bottom of our heart," says Director Jennie Shaw.

## Free dementia bands can bring peace of mind

If you, or someone you know, is worried about a friend or relative who has been diagnosed with dementia, our Dementia Wristbands could bring some peace of mind.

The bands contain a microchip with the wearer's

details, which can be scanned by a smart phone if they become lost or confused to allow them to be reunited with family or carers.

They are being distributed free of charge by Alzheimer's Support, and Carer Support

Wiltshire. They do not contain any GPS or tracking technology or an alarm and are not a replacement for dialling 999.

[More information and a referral form are available here](#).

## Message from BVT's Chair

It was another successful year for the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust, with an increase of 30 per cent in home security visits and a 20 per cent increase in talks and community engagements.

We are now represented on several safeguarding and domestic abuse prevention organisations and have strengthened our strategic partnerships.

The Stay Safe Online (SSO) service, under the leadership of Toni Evans, has continued to expand its reach and impact. The partnership with Wiltshire Police and a wide range of agencies was strengthened and it delivered an extensive programme of events and webinars.

Our SSO team of volunteers grew from five to 11 and the service saw a growth in referrals.

Fundraising activities continued throughout the year, with successful events including the open days at Middlewick House, a lunch and talk at Bowood House on rowing the Atlantic, the Bag-a-Bargain clothes sale, a dinner, concert and online auction in Mere and the Christmas Festive Food and Gift Fair at Bowood House. We have many exciting events planned for 2026 and thank everyone who has supported the WBVT throughout 2025, because without you, we would not be able to help so many people in Wiltshire.

I'd like to thank our Director Jennie Shaw, who works tirelessly for us and also her team and my fellow trustees for their continued dedication to the charity.

**Philip Coward**  
Chair of Trustees



# Bobby+Van+update

## Referrals are up by a third

We have seen a strong year of growth, with a 30 per cent increase in home security visits compared to 2024.

Having extra staff in place for much of the year and smoother ways of working has allowed us to reach more households and offer support to more people.

Community engagement has grown by 20 per cent too, with more talks and outreach sess-

ions. These events are an important way to share practical safety advice, raise awareness and help people feel confident about where to turn for support.

The reasons for referrals to us have stayed broadly the same, but one clear change has been a 50 per cent rise in domestic abuse referrals, which underlines the level of need and the importance of

strong partnerships with other agencies to make sure people get help at the right time.

This growth has been seen across all Wiltshire police districts, with some areas up by 50 per cent, showing that more people are being reached in every part of the county.

The Key Safe and the digital doorbell service both continue to be strongly utilised.

### Total Home Security Visits

2024

2025

**1,259 1,669**

### Stay Safe Online talks

2024

2025

**30 25**

### Stay Safe Online referrals

2022: 45 referrals

2023: 82 referrals (up 45%)

2024: 129 referrals (up 29%)

2025: 154 referrals (31%)

### Home security incidents 2025 v 2024

Incident Type	2025	2024
Vulnerable	838	690
Domestic Abuse	516	356
Burglary	62	40
Rogue Trader	44	36
ASB	39	42

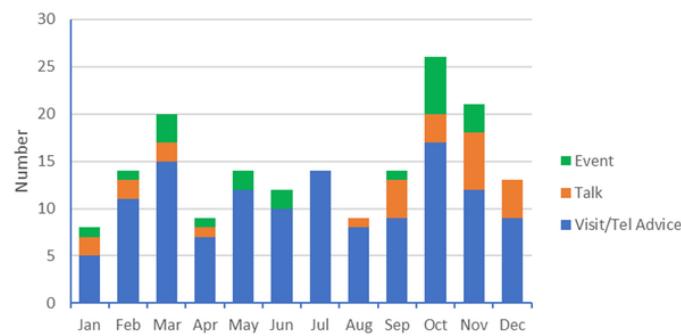
### Visits by police district 2025 v 2024

Swindon & surrounds	498	267
Salisbury & the South	346	272
West Wiltshire	336	415
North Wiltshire	296	204
Kennet	193	137

### Stay Safe Online overview 2025

	No	People	Remarks
<b>Talks</b>	25	550	Average of 22/talk
<b>Visits</b>	113	113	
<b>Tel Advice</b>	16	16	
<b>Events</b>	20	360	Excl Radio audiences
	<b>174</b>	<b>1039</b>	

Referral Type by Month - 2025



## Contact us

[wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk](http://wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk)

 Wiltshire Police Headquarters, London Road, Devizes SN10 2DN

 01225 256867

 [BobbyVan@wbvt.org](mailto:BobbyVan@wbvt.org)

## Future events

**March 4/5:** Bag a Bargain, Wellington Barn, Calstone

**March 15:** Bath Half

Marathon

**April 10:** Alsops Open Garden, Patney, Devizes

**June 6/7:** Middlewick House Open Garden

**Sept 9/10:** Bag a Bargain, Manor Farm, Longbridge Deverill (TBC)

**Sept 13:** Paws Dog Charity Show, Rainscombe Park, Marlborough

**Sept 19:** Swim Serpentine, Hyde Park, London

**Oct 2:** Devizes Autumn Fair, Corn Exchange, Devizes

**Oct 10:** Malmesbury Abbey Music Concert

**Oct 17:** Scottish Reeling, Devizes Town Hall

**Nov 30/Dec 1:** Bowood Festive Food & Gift Fair

**Get more details and buy tickets to our events [here](#)**

## Volunteering opportunities

If you are looking for some fulfilment and you have a little spare time, why not volunteer with us?

If you love baking we are always looking for cake makers for our sales and events and often need help sorting clothes for our sales. Talking of events, we always need volunteers to help there.

To find out more, email [susanna@wbvt.org](mailto:susanna@wbvt.org).

## Fundraisers

### Lottery:

Play the Swindon or Salisbury weekly lotteries and win up to £25,000.

**More details [here](#)**

### Easy Fundraising:

Raise money for us when you shop online. It's so easy to set up.

**More details [here](#)**