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Busbridge Community Forum area to trial secure mail storage

Theft of mail from postbags during delivery rounds has become such a nationwide problem that the Royal Mail is to experiment with newly designed secure storage points. The area covered by the newly formed Busbridge Community Forum is to be one of the first testing grounds.

Today's mail is so bulky and heavy that it is common practice for mail van drivers to leave supplies at convenient drop-off points for delivery later by local postmen. These might be in a porch, a garage or simply behind a hedge or fence. Often the mailbags are a visible temptation to thieves.

Manager of the Royal Mail's Godalming delivery office, Peter Herbert said, "There have been a number of cases of opportunist theft in this area but, in a worrying recent shift, we have seen violence offered to postmen. This is a growing problem. It's clear that something has to be done."

Mr Herbert went on to explain that in the past lockable storage boxes have been used in a few high-risk locations but these have been fixed to a building or the ground and so have required planning permission, plus detailed consultations with any utility companies that might have pipes or cables underground. The new steel box, which is about the size of a double kitchen unit and painted green to blend with gardens, is designed to be free standing. It is weighted so heavily that it cannot easily be removed. This eliminates the need for planning permission, requiring only the cooperation of the landowner, who will be paid a small annual rental of about twenty-five pounds.

"Bulk mail is not left for long, so the risk of theft from these lockable containers is considerably reduced. They're also weatherproof and, to a degree fire proof, so protection for mail is greatly enhanced" added Mr Herbert.

Chairman of Busbridge Community Forum, Mike Harrison said, "The run-up to Christmas last year gave local residents cause for concern when they saw valuable mail left unattended on public view. The risk of theft goes further than the loss of valuable items – people are increasingly worried about identity theft. For that reason we welcome the Royal Mail's initiative and have asked Peter Herbert to brief the next meeting of the Forum on 28 March".

Peter Herbert says he is hoping to persuade some Forum area residents to allow him to place the new boxes on their land.

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Notes to editors

Busbridge Community Forum was founded in October 2006.

It serves an area in the residential streets to the south of the town of Godalming, covering the districts of Busbridge, Holloway Hill, Crownpits and Bargate Wood. Residents can exchange information and express their views to the authorities through the forum.

Forum meetings are held approximately four times a year and there is also a lively exchange of views by e-mail. Residents can sign up for an e-mail list.

The forum is independent and non-political. It does not serve sectional interests or seek to usurp the function of other organisations within the area. Its function is to provide a focus for inclusive community action and help residents communicate their views to the authorities, including councils, the police, Royal Mail, road authorities and licensees in the area.

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