



Immediate Release 18/11/10

media release

Ground-breaking crime reporting system launched in Victoria

Victoria Business Improvement District is the first BID in the country to support Facewatch – a new crime reporting system aimed specifically at low level incidents such as shoplifting and bag theft.

Launched on **Thursday 18 November**, in Central Hall Westminster at 12pm **Facewatch** forms part of a range of anti-crime measures underway to meet the needs identified by the business community of the Victoria area. The pilot scheme consists of 31 venues – including retail outlets, public houses, bars, restaurants, cafes and the Victoria Coach Station. If deemed a success the scheme will be rolled out across the Victoria BID area.

Victoria BID is the first BID in the country to have an officer from the Metropolitan Police Service as a core member of its staff team. Ruth Duston, Chief Executive of Victoria BID says: **“This cost-effective system will complement other crime reduction measures we are currently introducing. We are incredibly excited to be the first BID to benefit from this system, which will add to our key objective in being designated a ‘Purple Flag’ destination in the Spring/Summer of next year.”**

The **Facewatch** scheme is based on a network of businesses using one simple, online system to report incidents and share information and CCTV images between businesses. Working closely with British Transport Police and the Metropolitan Police forces, the scheme will work by gathering and creating a database of new and known offenders so that data can be shared between businesses within the SW1 area, reducing the opportunity for crime to take place. **Facewatch** cuts the amount of time that it takes to report an incident and assembles the required evidence, making it easier to process a conviction and saving valuable time. In short, **Facewatch** saves time and money by streamlining the process of dealing with low-level crime.

Key benefits of Facewatch:

- Provides a safer environment for staff and customers
- Acts as a strong deterrent to potential criminals
- Be a more efficient way of reporting crime and provide better customer service
- Benefit the public: If someone had a bag stolen in a **Facewatch** venue, they could report the crime right there and then without having to go to a police station. They can get a crime reference number straight away (allowing them to make insurance claims) and through the scheme’s exclusive partnership with CPP have their payment cards cancelled instantly and replacements ordered
- Through the launch of **Facewatch** pilot scheme in Victoria and accompanying marketing/publicity surrounding it, the message will be sent to criminals that they face an increased possibility of being caught!

VICTORIA BID INTRODUCE FACEWATCH: MEDIA RELEASE 2010: 1 OF 4

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www.facewatch.co.uk

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CASE STUDY

The **Facewatch** system is in operation in selected premises in London and is already delivering positive results. A recent example is that of a prolific bag thief who, after release from prison, returned to a bar he had targeted in the past. He was captured stealing a bag on the Bar's CCTV and both moving and still images of the theft were immediately in the hands of the police via the **Facewatch** system. As a result officers were able to act swiftly and arrested him within 24 hours – stopping him from committing yet more thefts and upsetting the lives of more innocent victims.

Timeline

Bag theft occurred: 6/10/2010 at **20:50**

Crime reported with CCTV footage and images on Facewatch 6/10/2010 **23:51**

Police Crime reference allocated and input to Facewatch 7/10/2010 **10:40**

Images circulated by Met Police Visual Image Identification & Detections Offices (VIIDO) unit: 7/10/2010 **12.30**

Suspect apprehended and charged: 7/10/2010 **22:00**

Suspect remanded in custody at Southwark Court 8/10/2010

-ends-

For further information contact:

Contacts at Victoria BID

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Contacts at Facewatch

- Simon Burgess on **020 7930 3225** or **07800 763707** simonb@facewatch.co.uk
- Laura Downton at Carswell Gould on **023 8023 8001** laura@carswellgould.co.uk

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Safe & Secure



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Quotes from key partners introducing Facewatch to Victoria

Mike Noakes – Chair of the Victoria BID, says:

Community Safety has always been a key area of activity for the BID in Victoria. Despite being one of the safest parts of Westminster we want everyone to have a positive experience from a family day out to an evening spent with colleagues. Ultimately for business we want to ensure they can trade in an area where they feel supported by a committed police team delivering a range of community safety initiatives that help to create a positive experience to all who live work and visit the area. As a BID we are proud of the excellent partnership working and strong links forged with the Metropolitan and British Transport Police in delivering a holistic and joined up approach to policing around London's busiest transport interchange. **Facewatch** is a unique opportunity for us to pilot more innovative ways of business and police working together to stop crime.

Simon Gordon, Managing Director of Gordon's Wine Bar, says:

Before **Facewatch** existed I felt incredibly frustrated that little was being done to protect my customers from bag and other thefts. Now we have not only reduced theft dramatically but when it does occur we can offer our customers real assistance by taking away the hassle of crime reporting and providing them just one point of contact (CPP) to cancel all their cards and provide security support for free. That way they can get on with enjoying their evening literally within minutes of reporting the crime to us.

Nic Harper, Chair of Safe and Secure Victoria BID:

I believe that the **Facewatch** pilot scheme will greatly assist the Metropolitan Police in Westminster by providing a package of CCTV images and statements for use in court. I think it will definitely save a significant amount of police time and I believe that the system has already enabled the police to identify and arrest offenders more quickly. I am sure that the partnership with **Facewatch** will help us to reduce crime and target prolific thieves and other criminals, making the local area safer for the community and businesses, who have invested in CCTV equipment.

Card and Identity fraud expert from CPP, Michael Lynch, says:

Facewatch is a great example of technology leading the fight against opportunistic and organised crime – like our card protection service, the speed at which **Facewatch** operates puts the criminal on the back foot and reduces the likelihood of further criminal activity once the crime is reported to the police.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT VICTORIA BID – see www.inSW1.com

Victoria BID provides a platform for businesses to work together to improve and enhance the urban context of Victoria. Guided by local businesses and organisations, the Victoria BID team help shape Victoria's future development. A full programme of initiatives, services and events will be delivered by the BID which will complement new proposals for regeneration that will help reposition and strengthen Victoria's offer as a central business district over the next decade.

Key initiatives within the Safe & Secure agenda will be delivered by The Victoria Safer Neighborhood Business Team – a team of police and community support officers (PSCOs) who patrol part of the Victoria district, responding to the needs of the local business, visitor and tourist community. A Business Crime Reduction Officer, **Simon Reason**, is permanently based at BID HQ, driving strategic aspects of policing within the BID area. Simon's remit ranges from counter terrorism, to low level crime and anti social behaviour. Collectively, the safer business team will broker corporate relations within the business community, developing and implementing crime reduction initiatives at a strategic and frontline level.

As the collective voice of local businesses, both large and small and across all sectors, we are now underway with a range of activities. Drawing on Victoria's rich and diverse cultural mix, delivering services and opportunities to businesses and organisations, helping to make it not only a better place to work and play but to enhance the SW1 area as a primary destination for visitors to London and as a location with everything needed to encourage growth of the local economy.

ABOUT FACEWATCH – see www.facewatch.co.uk

Facewatch networks businesses using one simple, fast, efficient, online system to report low level crime and share information and CCTV images amongst members and the police. No additional investment in CCTV is required and the system pushes evidence to the police, compelling them to act.

Businesses who join Facewatch are given access to a secure website. If an incident such as a bag theft is committed on their premises they log the details directly onto the system, which are then passed **directly** onto police. To support the crime report both moving and still CCTV images are uploaded. A crime reference is generated instantly enabling the victim to contact their bank and insurance companies immediately.

Features of Facewatch:

- 1) Members share information with each other, alerting one another to potential trouble-makers and criminals, and allow their staff to act proactively to deter crime.
- 2) Can be used on any premises where low-level crime could be committed.
- 3) System is online so users can access the system from anywhere they like. No need to download any software - users simply use Facewatch's unique screen capture software to record still and moving footage from their CCTV cameras and upload it to the website.
- 4) Incident forms are completed online and sent direct to the police to deal with making this completely unique.
- 5) Businesses can provide a safer environment for staff and customers, a strong deterrent to potential criminals, and an efficient way of reporting crime and better customer service.

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