

PREMISES CLOSURE

Police in Maidstone have served a flat in Ragstone Lodge, Peel Street with a premises closure notice following drug raids last week.

The order means that no-one apart from the tenant can enter the property.

This comes after three addresses were raided there on 10 June seizing a quantity of ecstasy tablets and a large quantity of cannabis at another property there.

Following this a 23 year old man was arrested on suspicion of possession of class B drugs and a 35 year old man was also arrested on suspicion of supplying class B drugs. Both have been bailed pending further enquiries until 28 July.

Chief Superintendent Matthew Nix comments: "This closure not only stops drugs being sold at this address, but also puts an end to the frequent visitors to the property and the associated anti-social behaviour, which was causing misery for nearby residents. This action is a direct result of the police's close working relationship with Maidstone Borough Council and the local community and proves our commitment to react to their needs. Should the tenant breach this order, by anyone else attending the flat, he could be liable for up to six months in prison and a fine of £5000."

Martin Oxley from Town and Country Housing, who own the property, comments: "As a landlord we have a responsibility to ensure that all of our residents and their families can live in a safe environment.

'We take all reports of anti-social behaviour very seriously and work with local people and agencies to fully investigate all allegations of nuisance and anti-social behaviour making our neighbourhoods safer and friendlier places to live.

'In this case we received a number of complaints from other residents regarding these properties and have worked closely with the police to resolve the problems caused by both alleged drug dealing and anti-social behaviour from frequent visitors to the properties. 'We will continue to work with the Police to ensure that any future issues are dealt with.'

Cabinet Member for Community Services, Cllr John A. Wilson has congratulated Maidstone police on this operation to target drug dealing and related anti-social behaviour.

He said: "This is a fantastic result for Kent Police and the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Things like this make headlines today, but the people living around Peel Street will reap the rewards for years to come.

"Maidstone continues to be a safe place to live, work and enjoy."

An application for a full closure order of the property is being made at Maidstone Magistrates on Wednesday 23rd June. If granted, the tenant will be evicted and the property closed for 3 months.

DRIVE ILLEGALLY AND FACE A FINE

Drive illegally and face a fine - This warning from Maidstone Urban Neighbourhood Policing Team after they conducted stop checks in the town centre yesterday (3 June) fining 21 drivers, found to be breaking the law.

Seven drivers were fined £60 and given three points on their licence for speeding offences. Six drivers were slapped with a £60 penalty for not wearing their seatbelts and six others fined £30 for driving in bus lanes. Two others were found to be in breach of their excise

licence and also fined £30.

The checks were carried out by members of the area bike team and officers from Maidstone Urban Neighbourhood Policing Team in Mote Park, St Faith's Street, London Road and Sandling Road.

The Urban Blue Bus was also based in Mote Park so officers could engage with members of the public and children who were enjoying the half term sunshine.

Urban Neighbourhood Team Sergeant Andy Miller comments: "This check was arranged following various concerns regarding illegal traffic movement around the town and flouting of road traffic laws. We will continue to stage operations like this to assist in reducing the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on the road, by enforcement and education.

This operation was highly successful, as it hit home the message that basic road traffic laws such as wearing your seatbelt and keeping to the speed limit are there for a reason - to make our roads safer."

CATALYTIC CONVERTERS

Over 600 suspected stolen catalytic converters, with an estimated street value of £120,000, have been seized following a warrant by police and Environment Agency officers on Friday 4th June from a rural property in Detling.

15 officers swooped in a morning raid at the site in Yelsted, recovering 12 pallets each containing between 60 to 100 of catalytic converters, which are thought to be stolen. Following this, a 37 year old man was arrested on suspicion of handling stolen goods and has been bailed until 6 July.

This comes as part of a larger operation by police and partners to combat catalytic converter theft in the Maidstone area.

This operation will see officers searching scrap yards, making stop checks of vehicles carrying metal and at the end of June, SmartWater kits will be distributed to many rural locations so that catalytic converters can be marked up and identified if recovered.

Detective Chief Inspector Isobel Gibson of Maidstone Police, comments: "This warrant marks a significant step in our bid to crack down on the theft of catalytic converters. I hope this serves as a warning that we will be taking a tough line on those caught stealing or handling stolen goods.

This will be followed up by further work in distributing SmartWater kits to rural businesses. This will allow companies to mark their vehicles so that if catalytic converters are stolen and recovered they can be reunited with their rightful owners.

Criminals need to be aware that forensic marking has a 100 per cent conviction rate to date with an irrefutable link to the scene of a crime. Already where similar trials of the substance are being used they are having excellent results.

The solution remains on skin and hair for weeks and on clothing indefinitely, no matter how hard offenders try to scrub it off. Every offender arrested and brought into Maidstone custody suite will be automatically screened when they are booked in. This measure will also act as a powerful deterrent to those looking to steal catalytic converters, as if they are caught with SmartWater on them it will link them directly back to the scene of the crime."

If you have any information in connection with any of these messages or you would like to talk to anyone please call Lorraine on 01622 604395.