



**Contact** Helen Kennedy  
**Press Office** Human Resources  
**Telephone** 020 7230 3492

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## SHOPWATCH comes to Oxford Street for Christmas!

As Christmas shoppers head to central London the Met Police launch a new initiative against crime. On the 8th November 0900am, outside Dixons, 493-497 Oxford Street W1C, comedian Richard Blackwood will be joining senior members of the Met, the MPA and the Home office to support the ShopWatch scheme.

In partnership with the Met - The Carphone Warehouse, Debenhams, Dixons, Lillywhites, The Link and a whole host of other local stores have provided their staff to be trained as volunteer Special Constables, who will patrol the Oxford Street and Regent Street retail area.

10 newly attested Special Constables are attending the launch. Retail Staff who have successfully completed their training are joined by Police Staff who are also taking part in a similar Met run scheme to recruit specials, combating crime on Oxford Street and Regent Street.

The ShopWatch Special Constables, along with all Special Constables in London, will shortly be able to take advantage of the new 'free travel' - both on and off duty -on buses, tubes and Docklands Light Railway as part of the new agreement with Transport for London.

Commander James Smith, Head of Safer Neighbourhoods and the Met's extended Police family, including Special Constables said:

"This is a positive scheme for both the Met Police and retailers in the forthcoming Christmas shopping period and beyond. It is yet another step, in partnership, towards safer streets for the communities of London."

With millions of shoppers heading to Oxford Street and Regent Street to make full use of the 35 shopping days left before Christmas, ShopWatch is a welcome addition to the police presence in the area.

Sally Humphries, Chairperson of the Oxford Street Association said:

"The businesses that I have spoken to think it's an excellent idea."

The British Retail Consortium and London Retail Consortium who represent more than 80% of retail trade also support ShopWatch. Both organisations are actively encouraging retailers to join the scheme.

The idea was piloted earlier this year in Camden with extremely positive results, including a dramatic reduction in shoplifting and fraud. The rest of the UK is expected to follow in the footsteps of the Met's scheme, which has the full support of the Home Secretary David Blunkett. Other retailers are already in discussion with the Met to find out how they can join the scheme.

Nick Wood, Managing Director, Dixons said:

"When Dixons first piloted ShopWatch with the Met, our participating employees said they felt more attuned to spotting crime, and more confident in tackling criminals and shoplifters. Aside from the obvious financial benefit, the staff development alone makes this scheme worthwhile for us."

Bill Rego, Risk Manager, Woolworths said:

"Stock loss has halved in our Camden store and the scheme has seen a marked development in the performance and attitude of the ShopWatch recruit in that store."

**The way ShopWatch works:**

The idea of the programme involves retailers allowing their staff to be trained as Metropolitan Police Special Constables. These Special Constables, once fully trained then patrol in their own retail area on a regular basis.

Employees who volunteer for ShopWatch will receive fully paid leave to attend the Met's Special Constable training course. Once fully trained, these 'ShopWatch Specials' will also receive additional leave from their primary employer to compensate them for the time spent on patrol with the Special Constabulary.

Off duty ShopWatch Specials will provide a reassuring presence to other staff members during their regular working hours, due to their Police Training.

All types of retail staff can apply, whether on the shop floor, part of the management team or in the Security Department (see notes to News Desks for more details).

As well as gaining first class training, which will benefit staff outside their duties as a Special Constable, these employees can take pleasure in the knowledge that they are providing a valuable service to the community.

If store staff are interested in joining the scheme they can call 0845 727 2212 quoting reference 768. Also launching on the 8th November is the brand new ShopWatch website at [www.shopwatch.info](http://www.shopwatch.info) giving full information for staff, and for retail businesses who wish to give their support to ShopWatch.

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION: Notes to News desks:**

If you wish to attend the launch of the Oxford Street ShopWatch - please contact Helen Kennedy at the Human Resources Press Office on 020 7230 3492 or out of hours 07884 235185.

Press are required to provide an approved press pass if they wish to have any facilities at the event.

Specials will be available from 0800 for interviews.

If you wish to interview Richard Blackwood please call Helen Kennedy to put in your bid for a slot between 0830 and 0900am.

The launch and photo shoot will begin at 0900 - Commander James Smith, Rachel Whittaker MBE from the Met Police Authority and Richard Blackwood will be speaking. A new promotional logo for the Oxford Street Launch will also be revealed.

Logo Artwork for ShopWatch is downloadable from [www.shopwatch.info](http://www.shopwatch.info)

Who can apply? - Sales Staff, Cashiers/Customer Service, Warehouse Staff, Administration Staff, Assistant Managers, and Store Managers. Security Guards/Officers may also apply if they are employed directly by the participating employer.