



POLICING BY CONSENT “AT A TIPPING POINT”

Today’s timely warning from Ken Marsh, chair of the Police Federation, that policing by consent is now at real risk¹ has received backing from Witness Confident, the leading charity on police - public engagement. The warnings follow the spread across social media of a [mocking video of a disgraceful kung fu style attack on a female police officer in Wimbledon](#).

The charity which has undertaken ground breaking research on the walk on by culture² agrees that public support for the police can no longer be taken for granted and says the situation will only get worse from tomorrow when the Police discontinue use of the Self Evident App (more below) which enables the public to send photo and video evidence of crimes they capture on their phone directly and easily to the police. **From tomorrow, if you want to get evidence of street violence or other crimes to the police you will have to surrender your smartphone so all your data can be copied from it (a process than can take hours, if not days) after first completing a 20 minute online form or waiting on 101.** *“If the law abiding majority feel they have no practical option to walking on by, front line officers will feel increasingly isolated”,* says charity Director Guy Dehn. *“This bodes ill for policing by consent”.*

As the confidential MPS report on the Self Evident App ([released today and attached](#)) confirms at page 10 the loss of the App risks leading to a loss of witness co-operation, damage to victim confidence, increased costs and delay.

The charity helped develop the Self Evident App after its research among young people found that the main reason witnesses walk on by when they see street violence is the time it takes to engage with the police – with comments including

“I think the process of handing over evidence needs to be much, much simpler and easier”

“I am currently having to give a statement and am finding the onus is on me to go and give it, and make all the contact”.

“I have witnessed a crime, reported it to the police, made a follow up phone call and still not received any further police contact. Am I going to be influenced by anything other than a complete change of attitude by senior police?”

¹ [Radio 4, Today programme 20/11/18 at 2 hours 53 mins](#)

² [Public Policy, the Perils of Indifference and Street Violence](#) and [Evidence Lost](#)

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Immediate Release

POLICE TURN AWAY VICTIMS & WITNESSES OF CRIME

Victims and witnesses of crime across the country will no longer be able to send the Police photo and video evidence or to report crime by smartphone app from tomorrow (21st November) because the Met Police has decided to discontinue use of the Self Evident App.

The decision comes in spite of a Met Police Study finding the App

“has been successful in

- Crucially assisting the public and Police to capture and exhibit evidence with ease;
- Saving Police time and reducing the barrier to reporting;
- Providing Police officers evidence required to arrest and charge suspects; and
- Securing convictions at court based on evidence gathered on Self Evident”.

The Met Commissioner Cressida Dick has written that to end the rise in violence “we need to hear from those who feel fearful or have information about people carrying weapons without this information we are losing opportunities to get dangerous people off the streets”¹. Days earlier the App was used to send a video of street violence in Manchester ‘showing a knife user clearly striking someone.’ The Self Evident App has also been used successfully to report [gun crime, terrorism, child abuse, domestic violence and sexual harassment](#).

Witness Confident, the charity that promotes the App, says the decision means that the Police will be turning away victims and witnesses as one third of App users say they wouldn’t have reported the crime without the App. The charity points out that the online reporting form, developed by the Met, which takes over 20 minutes to complete, risks alienating younger and poorer people many of whom only go online using smartphones. As the online form – funded by the Home Office to be a national digital

101 - has no facility to attach evidence, the App's suspension means citizens will no longer be able to send the police photo or video evidence of crimes they capture on their phones, something Theresa May explicitly called on the Police to enable in January 2016 ².

The decision to discontinue use of the App was taken by the Met's Public Access Board and subsequently backed by its Commissioner on costs grounds. However, as the Met never discussed the proposed costs of taking over the App³ and refused to disclose its financial analysis, it is unclear if and how it took account of the savings the App will unlock or the fact that it is expected to free up over one hundred front line officers a year.

The London Assembly⁴ has expressed 'extreme concern' over the failure of the Met's digital programme to transform its work, improve outcomes or deliver any of the promised savings. Despite this track record and the fact that Self Evident is proven to work - it has 27,000 users, and has supplied over 5,000 pieces of evidence and 3,500 crime reports and is highly rated by its officers⁵ - the Met has decided to discontinue use of the Self Evident App.

NOTE TO EDITORS

[Click here for an explanation of the Decision, a full Briefing and a Savings Study.](#)

[Click here for a guide to how the Self Evident App works and a Met video.](#)

¹ Standard [Ending Violence on our Streets](#) 8 Nov 2108

² Home Sec Theresa May: "Citizens increasingly capture what is happening around them on video, generating potential evidence of crimes. Policing has not yet caught up: the most common means of contacting the police remains the telephone. Police forces must follow the example of banks and retailers and do more to connect with citizens who increasingly live their lives on line... [T]he prize is there for the taking. Millions if not billions of savings. Thousands of police officer hours saved. Untold crimes solved and victims satisfied. And all by getting the fundamentals – information communications technology – right" [Policing and Technology](#) 27 Jan 2016

³ [Briefing MPS and the Self Evident App](#) section 3.2.3

⁴ London Assembly [Pre-Budget Report](#), p 28 - Last year the Met wrote off all the £38m of promised savings from its digital work to 2020-21 because "the savings did not stack up financially". Separately in 2016 [the Met wrote off £4.1m on customised software for an iPad app trial – similar to Self Evident - for its officers before scrapping the trial.](#)

⁵ [Briefing MPS and the Self Evident App](#) section 3.2.1