

# Energy theft is turning homes into timebombs

By **Paul Jeeves** Crime Editor

THOUSANDS of homes could be “ticking bombs” because of owners who steal gas and electricity.

Meter tampering in the face of sky-high energy bills is putting lives at risk, say industry experts – and in one case caused the death of a toddler.

Rogue electricians and criminal gangs are behind a huge rise in people paying them to bypass their meters, which can cause gas leaks and explosions.

Rewiring electricity meters can cause fatal shocks or start fires.

Crimestoppers recorded 10,694 cases from January to November last year, compared with 2,566 in 2017. But the industry believes the real figure could be closer to 200,000.

A gas emergency engineer said: “I’ve seen people turn their homes into ticking bombs.”

In May 2021, Darren Greenham triggered a fatal blast at his home in Heysham, Lancs, when his meter was



**Fatal...blast caused by Darren Greenham, inset**



bypassed and he cut through a gas pipe to steal copper. It killed George Hinds, two, who lived next door. Greenham, 45, was given a 15-year jail term for manslaughter last year.

Criminal gangs also steal energy to run cannabis farms and cryptocurrency computer operations.

The Retail Energy Code estimates theft of £93million to £155million of gas and £737million to £1.2billion of electricity each year. Howard Forster, of gas operator Cadent, said: “Energy theft is an industry wide concern.”



**Bang on...Barbara with Chris, once of Simply Red, inset**



## Life's not hum drum for Babs, 90

**GREAT-gran Barbara McInnis is holding back the years at 90 with drumming lessons from ex-Simply Red star Chris Joyce.**

Barbara, 90, now plays in three bands herself after his coaching. She said: “It has

By **Douglas Whitbread**

brought genuine joy back. It's given me a new lease of life, a new interest. It's keeping me young.”

The widow, from Morecambe, Lancs, added: “I

like [to play to] Johnny B Goode.” Chris, 66, who co-founded the 80s sgroup with Mick Hucknall, said of his student: “She's great. It's inspiring for me and a lot of people as she's so enthusiastic.”

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