Families evacuated in bomb scare

Road cordoned off and bomb squad summoned after suspect package spotted. EXCLUSIVE: Dylan Davies

The drama began when a "suspect package" was spotted by a member of the public near the Arriva bus station in Park Avenue. Police, based in the station just yards away from the scene, cordoned off the road and called out the bomb disposal squad to detonate the package.

But after a five-hour operation it transpired that it was just a false alarm. Residents in Mae yr Afon and Park Avenue were told to first close all their windows and stay in their kitchens before later being allowed to return home. The bomb squad carried out a controlled explosion.

One Mae yr Afon resident, Francis James, mother of county councillor Paul James, said: "It was quite a surreal night and quite scary. I am so glad there was nothing serious there, people put things in the bins all the time and you just do not think."

"My granddaughter lives in Manchester and it's the kind of thing you would expect to hear in a big city like that, but not here."

"One thing that is scary, though, is the fact that it took the bomb squad around three hours to get there. If there was a bomb and it was on a timer, it would have been dangerous here."

Mrs James and her neighbours gathered outside the Day Centre whilst the bomb squad used a specially-designed robot to check the package.

"We were outside for over an hour and some of the older people were getting very cold and tired."

"The Day Centre and public toilets were shut, so we just stood on the side of the road."

Despite the inconvenience, Mrs James was full of praise for the emergency services.

She said: "What would we do without them, they work in a lot of danger and it is good to know they are here safeguarding lives, but it must have cost them to much to get the bomb squad here for nothing."

Another resident, Paul Wright, was not so complimentary, saying: "The whole thing was a joke."

"I had been out for the evening and came home to find I could not go in my house."

"I am diarrechic and needed to take my medicine but I had to wait."

"The Arriva bus depot was also evacuated, with services only slightly disrupted by the explosion."

Inspector Alan Smith of the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service said: "The bomb was a false alarm, but we received a call from a member of the public and took no chances."

"We had procedures to follow and set up an exclusion zone while the military arrived."

"Residents were evacuated from the area whilst the military conducted a controlled explosion. They were allowed back into their homes once the area had been cleared."

"The package turned out to be faulty, wrapped in a box with duct tape, which looked fairly suspicious, so we took no chances with the public's safety."

"Police are no longer..."