Eagle-eyed New Journal reader spots councillor's green machine chained to railings

Friends reunited: Rebecca gets her beloved stolen bike back

by SARA NEWMAN and TOM FOOT

LUCKY Rebecca Hossack is all smiles as she is reunited with an old friend.

Her stolen bike was returned to her on Thursday – and she was quick to thank the New Journal for publicising her desperate appeal in last week's paper.

The Conservative councillor's pleas for help were answered in spookily similar circumstances to that of her party leader David Cameron – who got his own beloved bike back days after it was stolen amid great publicity.

Cllr Hossack's distinctive green bike was spotted chained to railings in Arlington Road, Camden Town, by a sharp-eyed New Journal reader.

Architect Louisa Chandler raised the alarm and police turned up with bolt cutters. The bike was just missing its basket and seat.

Cllr Hossack said: "I'm so grateful to the Camden New Journal. If the article hadn't been published I may never have got it back.

"Louisa wouldn't take any money at first – but I put the £100 reward on the table and said it was for the children's holiday and she seemed happy with that."

A man was spotted last Tuesday removing the bike from a van and chaining it to a lamppost.

Cllr Hossack said: "Only 3 per cent of the 28,000 bikes stolen each year in London are returned to their owners so I'm really lucky to get it back. I couldn't sleep on Thursday night – I was so happy."

Cyclists confirmed she was one of the lucky ones. Conrad Manning, shop manager at Chamberlain's bike shop in Kentish Town Road, said: "She can regard herself as very lucky. I wouldn't say that the problem is getting worse – but the thefts seem more organised.

"The thieves work in gangs and they don't just steal the bike. I just had a man in today who had his hydraulic brake system removed from his bike. That would have been done by someone quite skilled and well-practised.

"We never buy any second-hand bikes here because of the problem."

Jean Dollimore, of the Camden Cycling Campaign, said: "It is interesting that the bike was returned after someone saw the picture in the paper. That is maybe something we will start doing on our website.

"A lot of these thefts go unreported – but if there is a photo to look at it would help."

She added: "I know people who have had their bike stolen and have stopped riding for a while afterwards. Camden Council has done very well putting up bike racks. I would advise people to lock up their bikes with two locks to be safe."

A police spokesman said prevention was the best way to beat thieves.

He said: "Police strongly advise that cyclists use purpose-made cycle stands located in the Borough of Camden to lock their cycles safely and securely. Over 70 per cent of bike thefts are from signposts and railings.

"You are likely to reduce the chance of your bike being stolen by almost 60 per cent if you use a designated cycle rack."

Cllr Rebecca Hossack is all smiles on Warren Mews after bring reunited with her bike this week