

Colin's Blog 3rd November 2017



My trusty broomstick

Adventure, saw me travel above the congested motorways and across the New Forest in Hampshire last Friday.

Did you know that William the Conqueror, set aside the 'New Forest' for hunting, in 1079, more than 900 years ago, and named it 'Nova Foresta,' which translated means 'new hunting

ground.' Like many areas of pagan England, witchcraft was practised, and indeed, there is still a 'ducking stall' preserved down the road in Christchurch. There are still many covers that exist across the UK today. Over five thousand ponies roam free across the forest, alongside cattle, donkeys, sheep and pigs all of which are owned by more than seven hundred 'commoners.' The forest has the highest concentration of ancient trees, with some Yew trees believed to be over 1,000 years old. There are also more than 2,600 species of Fungi. Now classified as a National Park, the New Forest covers an area of 150 square miles. My onward journey took me to Bournemouth, where I visited the Ultimate Tribute to Queen, 'which was performing in the Bournemouth Pavilion. I felt at home when they actually played *'It's a kind of magic!'* I parked my broomstick up at a local hotel, and the following evening I attended a Halloween themed firework event, just outside the town. After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast, it was time to travel on, back to Burley, for yet another gastronomical experience, and a browse around the Witch themed shops, like the one pictured above. Then it was time to put away my broomstick, and travel by car, back to Essex, on what I can only describe as motorways that were akin to the 'Road to Hell!'

Back to reality, meant that I accompanied my wife, daughter and grandchildren to Legoland on Monday. The British tradition of queuing was in abundance. I even had to line up for more than an hour for a cup of tea! Apparently, it was their last day before closing until reopening at Christmas, and many of the refreshment huts were closed. Bad planning on their part, especially as they were happy to allow thousands of people on site!!!!

I have started writing my blog on Tuesday, just before the expected 'Trick or Treat' callers arrive. I don't have a problem with this activity provided that they are young children, accompanied by adults, and not older children engaged in anti-social behaviour, through flour and eggs, being stupid, and upsetting our elderly or vulnerable residents. Years ago, the perpetrators would be given a cuff around the

ear, and a good telling off by the local bobby. If a police officer was to do this today, he or she would be in trouble, yet, as we all know, once upon a time, when the police were respected, and not abused or sworn at, children and young people learned respect. Luckily, during my time as a village policeman, I had the respect of the local community, and didn't have to resort to such measures!

In some peoples' eyes, there are no longer the element of respect, and because of this it is all too easy to cross the line, especially as the police themselves are now a 'thin blue line,' struggling to their best to maintain law and order, with fewer resources to help them to do so.

Action Fraud How Online Marketplace Fraudsters could be targeting jobseekers

Report Fraud & Internet Crime

0300 123 2040

Posted 23rd October 2017

Action Fraud has received intelligence which suggests that fraudsters are setting up fake job adverts online in order to lure in unsuspecting jobseekers.

How Online Marketplace Fraudsters usually operate

Fraudsters typically part victims with their money by offering bogus goods for sale via an online marketplace, set up using fake details.

Once a victim has committed to purchasing the goods from the fake account, the fraudster will send a **bogus email** claiming to be from an established **escrow*** provider. After convincing the victim to transfer their money to the escrow for safekeeping, the fraudsters break all contact and abandon the fake account.

How fraudsters are advertising sales roles

Action Fraud has received intelligence that suggests fraudsters are advertising fake sales roles on job vacancy websites in the hope of attracting unsuspecting jobseekers.

Once a jobseeker has shown interest, the fraudsters tell them they will be selling goods on the company's behalf; often the goods are cars or machinery, but they could be anything. Jobseekers are instructed that they must use their own personal pre-existing bank accounts and payment methods, as well as their own online marketplace accounts.

The fraudsters usually give a vague excuse as to why a business account or login is not available. Jobseekers are then sent photos and information of the products they

will be selling (which do not exist) in order to create an attractive advert to entice the primary victim; the buyer of the goods.

Once the victim has transferred their money to a bogus escrow provider, no goods are ever received, and all contact is broken off.

This leads to a financial loss for the buyer of the goods as nothing is ever received. Likewise, the recruited jobseeker receives none of the promised payment for their work as originally detailed in the bogus advert.

Protect Yourself

Buyers

- When making a large purchase such as a new car or machinery, always meet the seller face to face first and ask to see the goods before transferring any money.
- False adverts often offer goods for sale well below market value to entice potential victims; always be cautious.
- Exercise caution when sellers state that they are selling on behalf of a friend, colleague or business.

Jobseekers

- Don't assume advertised vacancies have been verified by the website or classified advertisement sites upon which they feature. If you suspect a job vacancy to be fraudulent, be sure to notify the website via their reporting/flag functions. Doing so prevents others from becoming victims of fraud and helps organisations and law enforcement tackle and disrupt fraudulent activity.
- Although many legitimate job vacancies are internet based sales roles, those which are vague about the business, product type, sales method or sales platform to be used should be approached with caution. It is always good practice to conduct further enquiries about an advertised role.
- Genuine businesses would never ask you to use your personal bank or online payment accounts to facilitate business transactions, nor would they ask to utilise your personal online marketplace account in order to sell their products. If someone claiming to represent the organisation suggests you do this or asks for your personal details so they can use your account(s) themselves, sever contact
 - Get more **advice and support from SaferJobs**: <https://www.safer-jobs.com/>

***Escrow** – An escrow is a type of agreement where a third party becomes involved in a financial transaction; an escrow provider will hold a sum whilst the transfer of goods or services is facilitated between two other parties. Upon transfer, the escrow provider will then release the funds as appropriate. Genuine escrow providers can be useful, however fraudsters frequently impersonate them for their own financial gain.

Report fraud and cyber-crime and receive a police crime reference number.

Timeshare fraud spike: losses of more than £90,000 in holiday season

Posted 24th October 2017

We received 30 reports of **timeshare fraud** between May and August this year with a total loss of £94,089.

Reports show that fraudsters are offering to sell victims a timeshare on a holiday property for an advance fee. However, once victims have paid the advance fee, they find they are unable to contact the 'salesperson' and struggle to have their money returned. Often it is discovered that the holiday property doesn't even exist.

Fraudsters impersonating police

Further reports show that fraudsters are also taking advantage by cold calling the victims of previous fraudulent or mis-sold timeshare schemes. The fraudsters claim to be from the Spanish authorities or legal firms that either do not exist or are clones of genuine firms.

The fraudsters are advising previous victims that they are owed compensation and simply need to pay a fee to obtain this money; or the fee is requested under the pretence that this is an administrative fee for the courts, after which the amount 'owed' to the victim can be released. The fraudsters are aware of the victim's personal details from the previous fraud and possess knowledge of their previous investment, giving the fraudsters false credibility.

Protect yourself from timeshare fraud

- **Stay safe online:** Check the web address is legitimate and has not been altered by slight changes to a domain name – such as going from .co.uk to .org
- **Check paperwork:** You should study receipts, invoices as well as terms and conditions. Be very wary of any companies that don't provide any at all. When booking through a holiday club or timeshare company, get the contract thoroughly vetted by a solicitor before signing up.
- **Never respond to unsolicited phone calls** – if in doubt, hang up.
- **If you're asked to pay**, or give your bank account details, end all contact.

- **Don't be fooled** by a professional looking website as the cost of creating a professional website is easily affordable and can be set up by fraudsters.
- **Always check** that the details of the organisation or company contacting you (such as website, address and phone number) are correct – the fraudsters may be masquerading as a legitimate organisation.
- Consider seeking independent legal and/or financial advice before making an investment.

Protect yourself from fraud recovery fraud

- Be aware of recovery fraud if you've fallen victim to fraud in the past. Challenge or ignore any calls, letters or emails from people you don't know or companies you've never contacted yourself.
- Ask how they found out that you had been a victim. Any report of fraud is protected by law and can't be shared with anyone else outside of law enforcement agencies.

Detective Inspector Chris Felton of the City of London Police's National Fraud Intelligence Bureau said: "With £90,000 worth of timeshare fraud losses reported to Action Fraud since May, we are urging people to be cautious. Fraudsters lure people in with an attractive timeshare offer on a holiday property only to then cease contact once the victim has paid an advance fee.

"As with all victims of fraud, our reports show that timeshare fraud victims are vulnerable to recovery fraud. Recovery fraud is a common way in which fraudsters attempt to defraud people who have already fallen victim to fraud by offering to return what they have lost.

"If in doubt, always check directly with the relevant organisation to ensure the correspondence has come from a legitimate source." If you have fallen victim to fraud or cyber-crime, please **report it**: -

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report-a-fraud-including-online-crime-you-believe>.



Colin's Comment: Our Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, has joined many other voices, in trying to get the message across to the Home Secretary and central government, that the Police desperately need more funding. Apparently, this has again fallen on deaf ears, I just hope that those responsible in Westminster, will repent, once our security goes to pot, following their failure to listen to those who know best. Maybe they will come to their senses, before it's too late?



Stay safe this weekend, remember that many elderly and, or vulnerable residents may well be lonely and frightened at home, whilst others are enjoying fireworks. make sure that your pets are comforted, and where possible, shielding from loud bangs, and remember my article on firework safety: If you are having a firework party at home, make sure that you follow the firework code at all times.



According to the RSPB, there has been a sharp increase in the reported number of crimes involving the shooting and poisoning of birds of prey. We need to protect our wildlife, some of which are on the endangered list. As a member and supporter of the RSPB, I am very concerned about this current trend, and ask all my readers to make sure that if they witness such crimes, that they report them to the Police and RSPB, in the hope that the perpetrators can be caught and punished.



To finish off my blog this week, I thought you might be amused at this photo of a splattered witch in Burley, who should have used a satnav, or gone to Specsavers.!



Keep Alert, Keep Secure, Keep Safe and have a great weekend!

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