



COLIN'S BLOG

12th May 2017

Colin has left the building!

I spent my last day at work on Monday, and I am now in a good position to make better use of my 'bus pass!'

I have chosen the picture of my wife and I, enjoying a visit to the 'Sky Garden,' in London last year, when we were surrounded by the beautiful array of plants. It was indeed, one of 'peace and tranquility,' and I know that, as a family, we will now have more time to explore and appreciate the world around us.

That said, through the work of Neighbourhood Watch, Rotary and Probus, I will of course be proud to continue to make a contribution to the well-being of our local community, and, to encourage others to do so along the way.

As I start to write my blog, interviews are taking place at Headquarters today, to seek to find my successor, as the new Essex Watch Liaison Officer. So, watch this space.....

Meanwhile, here's an update, which follows on from my Rogue Traders article last week (I couldn't print Trading Standard's Press release, as it was embargoed until after my publication date) :-

ROGUE TRADERS WEEK

During the week Monday 8th May to Friday 12th May, police forces, trading standards and partner agencies including NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH across the UK were involved in a week of enforcement activity aimed at disrupting criminals who masquerade as legitimate traders in order to target vulnerable – largely elderly – residents in all communities.

The event was co-ordinated by Operation Liberal, the Police national intelligence unit tackling Cross Border criminality and they are supported by National Police Chiefs Council.

Rogue traders are criminals who take advantage of householders by using high-pressure sales techniques. The work is often expensive, sub-standard and not required at all. Rogue trading is often linked to distraction burglary, which is carried out by an offender who gains access to a property by distracting or deceiving the householder in order to steal valuables or cash.

Operation Rogue Trader started in 2006 as a single day of action in the Midlands, involving police forces and trading standards teams. Since then it has expanded to involve almost every police force in England, Wales and Scotland, still working closely with Trading Standards but now involves other partner agencies. Over the course of the week, there was a combination of crime prevention work and enforcement activity.

The aim of Operation Rogue Trader was to work collaboratively with partners to disrupt and enforce against rogue traders.

This was achieved by the following objectives: -

The delivery of a strong enforcement message to rogue trading criminals and to encourage the robust prosecution of offenders

To disrupt and enforce against rogue trading criminals

To develop good practice in dealing with rogue traders

To develop intelligence in respect of known suspects and to identify intelligence gaps for future development

To raise public awareness of doorstep crime and provide reassurance thereby reducing the fear of crime and increasing customer satisfaction

To promote partnership working highlighting the importance of continued disruption activity against rogue traders

To raise awareness of doorstep crime and its impact on the victims amongst respective agencies

To provide a national communications and media strategy

Essex Police worked with partner agencies – including Trading Standards, County Councils and Neighbourhood Watch - throughout this week of action. Rogue traders target the elderly and vulnerable in our communities, using intimidation tactics, deception and bare faced lies in order to con people out of money.

Essex Police has had significant success in targeting these fraudsters over the past 12 months but they need to be as relentless in their duty to stop them as they are in their desire to continue offending.

As in previous years, the Rogue Trader campaign was designed to bring the spotlight on to this type of crime and to raise awareness of how everyone has a part to play in keeping the vulnerable in our communities safe.

Tougher penalties for speeding welcomed by road safety charity

News from Brake <http://www.brake.org.uk/>

Brake, the road safety charity, has welcomed a series of measures to get tough on drivers who break speed limits.

The new fines came into force from 24th April, when new sentencing guidelines take effect: <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/item/speeding-revised-2017/>

Drivers responsible for high speed offences will be given harsher fines, under a series of strict new rules for district judges and magistrates.

They could be fined 150% of their weekly income, rather than the existing level of 100%.

This includes drivers caught doing 41mph in a 20mph area, 51mph in a 30mph area or 66mph in a 40mph area.

Gary Rae, campaigns director for Brake, said: “Toughening the fines and penalties for speeding is long overdue. As a charity that offers a support service to families bereaved and injured in road crashes, we see every day the consequences of speeding on our roads. I hope that magistrates ensure the new sentences are consistently applied.”

Breaking the speed limit or travelling too fast for conditions was recorded (by police at crash scenes) as a contributory factor of 23% of fatal crashes in 2015 [1].

A Brake survey found that four in 10 (40%) UK drivers admitted they sometimes drive at 30mph in 20mph zones.[2]

Currently in the UK the minimum penalty for speeding is a £100 fine and three penalty points added to your driving licence, while the maximum fine is £1,000 or £2,500 for motorway offences.

Note to Editors

Speed will be at the heart of Road Safety Week in November 2017, coordinated by Brake, the road safety charity, and supported by Aviva.

The charity is also supporting the United Nations Global Road Safety Week (8-14 May) which focuses on ways to manage speed and prioritise road safety worldwide.

To help raise awareness about the dangers posed by speeding drivers, Brake will be working with campaigners, community groups, road safety professionals,

companies and schools, who can now register for a free action pack via www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk.

About Brake

Brake is a national road safety and sustainable transport charity, founded in 1995, that exists to stop the needless deaths, serious injuries and pollution occurring on our roads every day. We work to make streets and communities safer for everyone, and care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes. Brake's vision is a world where there are zero road deaths and injuries, and people can get around in ways that are safe, sustainable, healthy and fair. We do this by pushing for legislative change through national campaigns, community education, services for road safety professionals and employers, and by coordinating the UK's flagship road safety event every November, **Road Safety Week**. Brake is a national, government-funded provider of support to families and individuals devastated by road death and serious injury, including through a helpline and support packs.

Follow Brake on Twitter, Facebook, or The Brake Blog.

Road crashes are not accidents; they are devastating and preventable events, not chance mishaps. Calling them accidents undermines work to make roads safer, and can cause insult to families whose lives have been torn apart by needless casualties.

Warning to summer holidaymakers as more victims are falling to holiday fraud

- £7.2 million lost, with airline tickets, online accommodation and timeshares targeted
- **ABTA**, the **City of London Police** and **Get Safe Online** are once again joining forces to warn the public about the dangers posed by holiday booking fraud.
- Number of reported cases has risen almost 20% year on year from 4,910 to 5,826.
- The three campaign partners believe that these figures are only the tip of the iceberg with many victims not reporting the fact that they have been defrauded.
- Findings from a new report reveal the scale of reported crime and expose common tactics used by fraudsters

The average amount lost per person to **holiday fraud** last year was approximately £1,200, but losses are not just financial; they can also have an impact on health. Over a quarter (26%) of victims say that the fraud had also had a significant impact on their health or financial well-being. Most worryingly of all, 259 people said the impact on them was severe, meaning that they had to receive medical treatment or were at risk of bankruptcy. The most common types of holiday fraud relate to the sale of airline tickets, booking accommodation online as well as timeshare sales.

Types of holiday booking fraud

In 2016, 5,826 cases of holiday booking fraud were reported to Action Fraud. The most common types of fraud related to:

- **Holiday accommodation:** Fraudsters are making full use of the internet to con holidaymakers by setting up fake websites, hacking into legitimate accounts and posting fake adverts on websites and social media.
- **Airline tickets:** where a customer believes they are booking a flight and receives a fake ticket or pays for a ticket that never turns up. In 2016, flights to Africa and the Indian sub-continent were particularly targeted, suggesting that fraudsters are targeting the visiting friends and family market and may well be making use of lack of knowledge of the strict regulations in place for the legitimate UK based travel industry.
- **Sports and religious trips:** a popular target for fraud due to limited availability of tickets and consequently higher prices.
- **Timeshares and holiday clubs:** The sums involved with this form of fraud are particularly high with victims often losing tens of thousands of pounds each.

How victims lose out to holiday booking fraud

In common with previous years, the numbers of people reporting travel fraud to the police jumps in the summer and in December. This is a very clear indication that fraudsters are targeting the most popular travel periods. Customers may be particularly vulnerable in 2017 as the overseas travel industry is reporting good early booking levels with accommodation and flights at a premium. Fraudsters could take advantage of this by offering “good deals” over the summer. These will then fail to materialise, leaving people out of pocket and with either no flights or nowhere to stay.

Bank transfer bookings

The two age groups most commonly targeted are those aged 20-29 and 30-39, with older generations less likely to fall victim, particularly those over 50 who are perhaps more wary of “too good to be true” offers. The majority of those who are defrauded pay by methods such as bank transfer or cash with no means of getting their money back. Some fraudsters now actively encourage these payment methods by claiming that only these payment methods are protected by their own bogus insurance schemes.

Deputy Head of Action Fraud, Steve Proffitt, said: “Action Fraud has seen a consistent rise in the number of holiday fraud reports made over the past five years. We recommend that people are thorough when researching their travel arrangements and book directly with an airline or hotel, or through a reputable agent. When deciding to deal directly with a property owner or letting agent, ask them questions about the booking, room, location and area.

From fraudulent flights to non-existent accommodation, the impact of falling victim to holiday fraud can be far greater than the financial loss and we hope that by raising awareness, people will feel better able to protect themselves from being a victim of fraud. We urge anyone who believes they have been a victim of fraud to visit actionfraud.police.uk and report the incident.”

Top tips to avoid becoming a travel fraud victim

- **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
- **Do your research:** Don't just rely on one review - do a thorough online search to check the company's credentials. If a company is defrauding people there is a good chance that consumers will post details of their experiences, and warnings about the company.
- **Look for the logo:** Check whether the company is a member of a recognised trade body such as ABTA. If you have any doubts, you can verify membership of ABTA online, at www.abta.com.
- **Pay safe:** Never pay directly into a private individual's bank account. Paying by direct bank transfer is like paying by cash – the money is very difficult to trace and is not refundable. Wherever possible, pay by credit card or a debit card.
- **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, get the contract thoroughly vetted by a solicitor before signing up.
- **Use your instincts:** If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Get free expert advice:** For further advice on how to stay safe when booking or researching travel online, go to [Get Safe Online](#).

Report fraud and cyber crime to Action Fraud and receive a police crime reference number.

http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud

Action Fraud

Report Fraud & Internet Crime

0300 123 2040

Find out more about reporting fraud to Action Fraud, including how to report fraud, what we do with your information and why it's so important to report fraud.

Scam emails

Help disrupt fraudsters by reporting scam emails that you receive. The reports received by Action Fraud will be forwarded to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau run by the City of London Police for collation and analysis.

GONE TO POT



I just noticed on the Keep Britain Tidy website that this week has been 'National Composting Week,' so, help the planet and yourself - get composting

Did you know - composting at home for just one year can save global warming gases equivalent to all the CO₂ your kettle produces annually.

Now in its 23rd year, this week is international compost awareness week - the perfect time to try composting yourself.

And at the same as saving your food and garden waste from going to landfill, you'll be saving yourself money, by creating a useful fertiliser for your garden, plant pots or veggie plot.

If you'd more information or to have all your composting questions answered, including a step-by-step guide to getting started, visit: www.recyclenow.com

ENJOYING OUR WONDERFUL COUNTRYSIDE



As I glance out of my window, whilst taking a couple of minutes break from the computer, and allowing the keyboard too cool down, I am heartened by seeing the beautiful cloud free sky, enhanced by brilliant sunshine!

Most of you will know about my love of nature, and they joy that I know that I share with many of my readers in respect of our glorious countryside.

With the days seemingly, getting longer, as summer approaches, I look forward to

Making the most of my retirement. As a grandparent, I look upon this as a golden opportunity to spend more time outdoors with my grandchildren, two of whom live closeby in Harlow, and my other two, way up in The Fens!

With the ever increasing amount of time that children and young people, are spending on their mobile phones, tablets, computers, X Boxes and Game Boys etc., Parents and Grandparents or carers, have an opportunity to encourage them to pull themselves away from technology and spend some time to explore 'The Great Outdoors. We need them to understand the importance of our heritage and our surroundings, so that as they develop into young adults, they have an understanding of the need to appreciate and conserve it not only for themselves, but for future generations.

We are surrounded by many public rights of way, and numerous country parks, which offer great outdoor experiences for both young and old to enjoy!



Apparently MAY is 'National Walking Month,' so here's another reason to get out and about: -

National Walking Month is a campaign to promote the benefits of walking and to get everyone walking, no matter what your level of fitness is. And irresponsibility of thos

Walking is simple and free and one of the easiest ways to be more active, lose weight and become healthier. (Now I'm retired, perhaps I should give it a go!)

BITTER LITTER CAMPAIGN

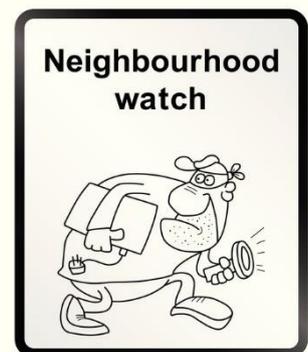
Every time I come across litter, yes, even a bit of litter, I become incensed about the stupidity of those selfish individuals who wilfully drop litter, and I will be continuing my anti-litter campaign alongside 'Keep Britain Tidy,' Essex County Council, and local district and borough council campaigns.

I will also be focussing on the criminal activity of Fly Tipping, which blights both our rural and urban landscapes.

As a longstanding judge of the annual Essex Playing Fields and Childrens Playgrounds, I also get very concerned as to the amount of litter that is recklessly discarded, sometimes within just a few feet of a litter bin. My experience has shown that some of the biggest offenders are adults, who use the expensive exercise equipment in some parks, where they wilfully, leave their empty water bottles on the ground, often within a short distance from a litter bin – Shame on them!



We need to continue to lobby the judiciary and courts to impose punishments that **actually fit the crime!**



NEIGHBOURHOOD MATTERS

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THE ESSENCE OF COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGHOUT ESSEX

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Supporting Essex Police, Essex Watch, Essex Community Safety Partnerships, Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Association and London Community Watch.

KEEP ALERT, KEEP SECURE, KEEP SAFE and HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!

Colin.