



Colin's Blog

Friday 13th April 2018

April showers and nasty downpours, have been prevalent since Spring has sprung, but it hasn't stopped most of us from enjoying the splendours of our Essex Countryside in between. In the past week, my family and I have been privileged to visit Boydells Dairy Farm, where we witnessed lambs being born, sheep milking, cow milking, and saw many other farm animals

Our grandchildren were able to bottle feed some of the lambs, bringing home the wonders of new birth and new beginnings, which is so much part of Spring.

We also spent a great day on the Epping and Ongar Railway, travelling on a train hauled by a steam locomotive, then as passengers on a DMU (Diesel Multiple Unit). So, you can tell that we have visited both the old and the new.

It is wonderful to be able to show our grandchildren the many wonders that surround us, outside of the world of TV, Computers, Laptops, PS4's, Xboxes, and the ever-present mobile phones. We all need to encourage more children, and young people, to explore the benefits of being outdoors.

Premium rate 'Insolvency Service' phone

scam posted 6th April 2018

Members of the public are being warned not to fall for a telephony scam which asks you to make premium-rate calls to the Insolvency Service.

The Insolvency Service is a Government agency that supports people in financial distress, tackling financial wrongdoing and maximising returns to creditors.

They have been made aware of a scam where members of the public are receiving telephone messages to make unscheduled and unnecessary calls to the Insolvency Service.

Not only are unsuspecting members of the public being asked to make unnecessary calls, but they are being asked to dial a telephone number that although does connect to the Insolvency Service, is not one of their official numbers and is premium-rate that costs a lot of money.

According to the Government agency the scam appears to be instigated by a website based outside of the UK.

They Insolvency Service has given the following advice;

- If you're being asked to call the Insolvency Service but you are not going through a bankruptcy or insolvency matter – be careful as it could be a scam phone call.
- Take a look at the number you're being asked to call – if it looks like it's a premium rate number then it might not be legitimate.
- If you're still unsure about the number, check the official Insolvency Service website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/insolvency-service>
- to see if it is one of our numbers.
- You can also check numbers using a standard search engine as if it is a legitimate number you will be taken to an official website.

Read more on the Insolvency Service website.

Please note: Action Fraud is not responsible for the content on external websites

If you think you have been a victim of fraud you should report it to Action Fraud by

Action Fraud reports show £6.7 million lost to holiday booking fraud Posted 10th April 2018

- The City of London Police, ABTA and Get Safe Online join forces to combat holiday fraud.
- Fraudsters stole £6.7 million from 4,700 unsuspecting holidaymakers and other travellers in 2017.
- 575 people received medical treatment or were at risk of bankruptcy as a result.

A report compiled by Action Fraud, which is run by the City of London Police, reveals the scale of reported crime and exposes the common tactics used by fraudsters.

The average amount lost per person was over £1,500, an increase of 25% year on year. These individual losses are substantial, but this form of fraud also has other severe effects with almost half (2,245) of victims saying that it also had a significant impact on their health or financial wellbeing. Most worryingly of all, 575 people said the impact on them was so severe that they had to receive medical treatment or were at risk of bankruptcy.

The most common types of fraud relate to the sale of airline tickets (47%) and accommodation booking (38%).

4,700 people told Action Fraud that they had been the victim of a travel related fraud in 2017. The three campaign partners believe that the actual figure is much higher, with many victims not realising that they should always report the fraud to Action Fraud.

In common with previous years, the numbers of people reporting travel fraud jumps in the summer and in December. This is a very clear indication that fraudsters are targeting the peak holiday periods and people who are going home to visit friends and family. Fraudsters know that demand will be high and availability low, so good value bookings will be harder to find with customers on the lookout for reasonable prices.

The visiting friends and family market is particularly attractive to fraudsters offering fake flight tickets and package arrangements. Fraudsters may also be targeting individuals travelling home to visit family in time for public or religious holidays. Where destinations were reported by victims, 54% said they had been intending to travel to Africa and 24% to Asia.

Director of Action Fraud, Pauline Smith, said:

“Holidays are the perfect chance to relax and unwind, however as this year’s statistics show, they are also an opportunity for fraudsters to trick you out of your hard-earned money. The startling emotional impact of falling victim to holiday fraud is highlighted in the latest figures, as 575 people reported that the harm to them was so severe, they had to receive medical treatment or were at risk of bankruptcy. This is why we are raising awareness so that people feel better able to protect themselves from being a victim of fraud. We know that fraudsters are increasingly using more sophisticated ways to trick their victims, which is why it is important that you do your research when making travel arrangements. If you think you have been a victim of fraud, contact Action Fraud.”

Chief Executive of ABTA, Mark Tanzer, said:

“ABTA sees first-hand the damage caused by travel fraudsters with many devastated customers who contact us for advice after they find out their much-anticipated holiday or trip to visit loved ones may not actually exist. The cost to them is not just financial; this crime causes very real disappointment and emotional distress. However, this does not need to happen. Check and follow the tips and advice on abta.com and you will not fall victim to these unscrupulous individuals. But if you are unlucky enough to do so, always report it to Action Fraud so that they can put these crooks out of business.”

Tony Neate of Get Safe Online, said:

“Holidays and trips abroad are one of the biggest purchases we’ll make each year so keep an eye out for tell-tale signs something isn’t quite as it seems. It can be quite tempting to get lured in by the offer of a cut price flight or a deal on accommodation when you are caught up in the excitement of booking a holiday. Small steps can stop you getting caught out by a holiday scam through such as researching the company you are booking through, especially ones that aren’t mainstream operators. Check well known review sites too so you can see what previous customers’ experiences have been and, where possible, pay by credit card to get extra protection in case anything does go wrong.”

In 2017, the most common types of holiday booking fraud reported to Action 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 person believes they are booking a flight and receives a fake ticket or pays for a ticket that never turns up. In 2017, flights to Africa and the Indian sub-continent were particularly targeted.
- **Sports and religious trips** – a popular target for fraud due to limited availability of tickets and consequently higher prices.
- **Caravanning** – Action Fraud reported a number of people reporting being the victim of fraud relating to mobile home holidays.

Top tips to avoid becoming a victim of travel 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
- **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:** Wherever possible, pay by credit card and be wary about paying directly into a private individual's bank account.
- **Check documentation:** You should study terms and conditions and 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.
- **Trust your instincts:** If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Report it:** Victims should contact Action Fraud: - https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud or by calling **0300 123 20 40**

- **Get free expert advice:** For further advice on how to stay safe when booking or researching travel online, visit **Get Safe Online:** - <https://www.getsafeonline.org/>

Alergy Awareness Week 23rd – 29th April 2018

<https://www.allergyuk.org>

If you, your children or grandchildren suffer from allergies, this is a good awareness week to follow.



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"I'd like to commend you for telling me your password. What is it?"

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You can also read my blog at: <http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>

HELPING COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEMSELVES

