

Colin's Blog 'Spring's To Life' 17th March 2017



The humble primrose springs to life
Adorning signs of spring for all to see
A sign of new life, growth and hope
Whilst advertising its splendour to
The passing honey bee



With daffodils trumpeting the arrival of Spring, crocuses rising to the challenge, and daises completing the chain, I look forward to the arrival of British Summer Time, bringing the benefit of more daylight hours to wallow in the splendour and glory of new and renewed life.

As nature treads the difficult, and somewhat uneven path, towards its spectacular display, our busy and often complicated lives, sometimes means that we, don't always allow ourselves time, to take in, and enjoy and savour each moment, and fail to notice the natural wonders that surround us.

Our native Bluebells will soon be seen to be 'Ringing in the changes,' a further reminder, of the joys of Spring.

Isn't it good to just take a moment to admire and appreciate, the what's around us, before some ignorant selfish person, decides to blight our wonderful countryside and urban open spaces, by flytipping, littering, vandalism and anti-social behaviour?

Looking back through history, is it not time to bring back 'The stocks,' giving the culprits time to reflect upon their crimes, whilst being publicly shamed and humiliated? Now there's a thought



SPRING WATCH

Daffodils abundant in their glory, announce the coming of spring and bring joy and hope to many.

Spring also brings new growth, new beginnings, longer daylight hours, and puts a 'Spring in our step.'

Essex Watch '**Spring Watch campaign,**' has very little to do with nature and the seasons,

however, it serves as a reminder to all of us to make sure that we continue to be vigilant, think security, think safety and 'think community.' Remember that criminals, looking for easy pickings, can see more opportunities in daylight.

This time of year, is when most of us will be busy in the garden whilst our children or grandchildren will be playing outside more. Here are a few Spring crime prevention reminders: -

Please remember to keep an eye on your gardening tools while in the garden. Put tools and equipment away after you're finished with them.

Don't leave valuable items on display and ensure items such as lawnmowers and strimmer's are locked away securely.

Property mark items and record serial numbers.

Lock your house doors and windows if you are in the garden.

Tidy away children's toys – especially bicycles and scooters.

SHEDS, GARAGES, WORKSHOPS, LOCK-UPS AND OTHER OUTBUILDINGS



As in previous years, the Police are urging everyone to ensure their premises are secure and are offering some practical steps that can be taken reduce the risk of burglary. (This advice applies throughout all seasons!)

Ensure that all sheds, garages, workshops, lock-ups and other outbuildings, are in a good state of repair and that any damaged or rotten sections of their structure, which could make it easier for a thief to gain access, are repaired or replaced.

- Use quality close shackle padlocks which cannot be easily levered or cut.
- If you have a window in the premises, consider whether you actually need it and if not consider boarding it over securely. Otherwise, make the window opaque or cover windows to ensure the property inside is not on display.
- Consider fitting key operated locks to any opening windows or screwing them shut.
- Where the building is a wooden structure, consider lining the property with plywood sheeting to make it more difficult for a thief to get through without proper tools and lots of time.
- Consider fitting an alarm, these are readily available from DIY stores or local locksmiths.
- Chain any tools through their handles to large heavy items such as lawn mowers or cultivators. If you have neither of these fill a bucket with concrete and, using a masonry fixing, chain your tools to this.
- Mark all valuables within your premises with your postcode and house number; record serial numbers of all equipment and keep the records safe.
- Good security lighting, using existing lights, (consider installing a time switch or adding sensor lights).
- Ensure that all sheds, garages, lock-ups or other relevant outbuildings, are securely locked and never left unlocked whilst unoccupied.



The City of London Police's National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) has identified that fraudsters are now using background hold music in a bid to make their calls more convincing.

Organised crime groups are attempting to defraud members of the public by impersonating the customer's bank and according to a convicted fraudster the methods used by them are evolving. The NFIB has been made aware that fraudsters are now using background music, similar to that used by the bank, when the customer is put on hold. The fraudsters use this music as an attempt to convince the customer that the call is genuinely from the bank.

A convicted fraudster explained:

"The banks say they would never call and ask for your account details or PIN numbers. My advice is never speak to anyone who calls you about your account, even if there is background music or other similar factors. If you have any concerns go to a branch or hang up and call the bank direct."

- If you receive an unsolicited email or phone call from what appears to be your bank or building society asking for your security details, never reveal your password, login details or account numbers. Most banks will not approach their customers in this manner.
- If you are concerned about the source of a call, hang up and call your bank back on the legitimate phone number printed on your bank statements or other official bank documents/sources.
- Check your statements carefully and immediately report anything suspicious to the financial institution concerned.

Stephen Proffitt, Deputy Head of Action Fraud said: "Fraudsters are constantly developing new ways to make their calls more convincing so members of the public need to remain vigilant. If you receive a cold call purporting to be from your bank, always end the call as soon as possible and call your bank back using the number on the back of your bank card or statement and ask to be put through to the fraud team. Tell them exactly what has just occurred. If you believe your bank details may have been compromised, you should report this to your bank immediately."

Report fraud and cybercrime to Action Fraud and receive a police crime reference number: -

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

ActionFraud

Report Fraud & Internet Crime

0300 123 2040

With the cost of **CYBER CRIME** now reaching an all-time high of around £27 Billion pounds, we all need to make sure that we protect ourselves and all of our connected devices against Cyber attacks, whereby your personal and banking details are obtained and used by Cyber Criminals.

Over the next few weeks, I will be updating my series of '**Inter-Crime**' articles, starting with the build up to my 'Don't be fooled campaign around 'April Fool's Day!'



You can report Crime Anonymously

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/in-your-area/eastern/essex/>

LATEST IDENTITY FRAUD STATISTICS SHOW THAT 173,000 CASES OF Identity Fraud were reported last year!



Returning to 'Flower Power!'

I started my blog, talking about flowers, now here is some advice to help to prevent your '*Blooming efforts,*' from being stolen!

Spring is here and Summer will soon be fast approaching along with the usual crime trends that accompany it.

In past years, we have noticed a sizeable increase in the theft of large pot plants and hanging baskets from private houses throughout Essex.

Where the thieves have been seen, it is reported that they simply pull up outside the house, usually in a van, two men walk into the garden then lift the pot into the vehicle and drive off. It's all over in a few seconds. The thieves seem to be targeting large pot plants (some of the ones stolen are valued at over £200 each), as well as garden ornaments and mature hanging baskets. Almost without exception the thefts have occurred from FRONT gardens.

There are very few ways by which you can secure a large terracotta pot to the floor and if you chain hanging baskets to their brackets, past offences have shown that the thieves may simply pull the brackets from the wall causing more damage.

The best advice we can give is not to display such items where passing thieves will be able to see them from the highway. If you have valuable pots and hanging baskets display them in the BACK garden; at least over the summer period.

The thieves know that there is big money to be made in stolen pot plants, hanging baskets, garden furniture, lawnmowers and other gardening equipment at this time of the year. We appreciate these items are difficult to secure but at the very least, don't make it easy for them.



And, before I sign off, something for dog owners to consider, is that 49% of dogs that are taken, (that's stolen), from their owners, are taken from their front gardens!

If you own a pedigree dog, the thief will try to ask for a ransom, or sell the dog on. If your dog is just a well-loved pet, with no particular pedigree background, the thief may still extort money from you or sell the family pet on to people involved in the unlawful act of 'Dog Fighting!'

Essex Police are proud to support Dog Lost who are allegedly the UK's largest, free, lost and found dog service. Kent Police amongst others are partners too. In summary, they offer advice and assistance in searching for missing dogs. They have a website advertising lost dogs. Dogs are automatically entered on to their forum "dogs lost" which allows posts/replies to be added from members with information which may help reunite dog and owner.

They can help with press releases and give the numbers of local press and radio stations. They are willing to speak to the press to furnish them with facts, figures and contact names. They create a missing dog poster that can be printed off and/or emailed to a friend direct from site. It is apparent an amount of information comes their way with regard to stolen dogs and, from a police perspective, it is essential that Essex Police record and use any intelligence to prevent and detect crime.

On a number of occasions the publicity given to a lost / stolen dog makes it 'too hot to handle' and thieves either return the dog claiming to have found it if there is a reward offered, or dump the dog allowing a legitimate finder to help reunite dog and owner.

As a life-long animal lover, and member of several animal charities, I am a great supporter of this initiative, and appreciate that any 'leads' pointing to the perpetrators of such crimes, will allow us to, 'hound them,' 'feel their collars' and bring them before the courts to face justice.

As your Essex Watch Liaison Officer, I am always happy to act as a point of contact, and pass on any information, and of course you can also report information about dog related crimes using 101 or 999 (as appropriate). Alternatively contact: -

<http://doglost.co.uk/>



Following calls from residents concerned about cold callers selling burglar alarms the police and District / Borough Council's advice is, if you are concerned about your security and considering fitting a burglar alarm, contact your local police Crime Prevention Tactical Advisor (crime prevention officer) or Council Community Safety Officer who will give you free advice and put you in touch with regulated alarm installation companies in your area.

Residents throughout the county have reported receiving unsolicited telephone calls from companies who say that crime is on the increase in their area and that they are at risk. They offer to install a free or very cheap burglar alarm and claim they are working with agencies such as the Home Office, District Council or the police. ***This is not true.***

Epping Forest Crime Prevention Assistant, Tony Ellis, and the EFDC's District Council's Community Safety Officer, Paul Gardener pointed out that most people who have been contacted by these companies have had the good sense not to allow them to visit their home but on the odd occasion, when work has been carried out, the cost to the customer has been exorbitant. One man was charged £3,000 in installation and monitoring costs.

The callers may block their own telephone number so they can't be called back. However, if any interest is shown in their product they will persistently call and badger the homeowner to agree to a visit particularly if they find out they are elderly.

Our advice is not to buy a security alarm from a cold caller over the telephone or at the door and don't agree to a visit.

If you do feel that you have been a victim of malicious cold calling regarding home security then contact Trading Standards.

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Trading-Standards/Pages/Contact-Trading-Standards.aspx>

As crime prevention tacticians we always welcome calls from people who want advice to keep themselves and their property secure whether it is installing an appropriate security alarm or something as simple as having proper locks fitted to your home.



HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

AND HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!