



HERTFORDSHIRE

CONSTABULARY

Royston Rural Watch, July 2019

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***Our Non -
Emergency
Number 101***

Extra patrols following church roof thefts

- Local officers step up patrols around rural churches as more lead goes missing from church roofs in Hertfordshire.
- St Faiths in Kelshall targeted around the same time as lead was stolen from a church in Furneux Pelham.
- Local residents asked to remain vigilant and report all suspicious activity.

Officers in North Herts are stepping up patrols around vulnerable churches in the rural areas surrounding Royston, after a second lead church roof was stolen in Hertfordshire.

The Church of St Faiths in Kelshall had part of its lead roof stripped sometime before Tuesday 18 June, around the same time that St Mary's Church in Furneux Pelham was also targeted by thieves.

"It is a travesty that these beautiful buildings are being targeted in this way, not only causing damage to the structure of the church at the time, but also leaving them vulnerable to more damage by being exposed to the elements," said Chief inspector for North Herts Sally Phillips.

“The cost to repair such old buildings is astronomical, so we are determined to find those responsible and prevent further thefts of this nature occurring.

“As well as carrying out extra patrols in key areas we are appealing to local residents to be extra vigilant and to report any suspicious activity, particularly around churches,” added Neighbourhood Inspector Richard Lilley. “Also if you are aware of a large quantity of lead being offered for sale we would like to hear from you.”

Anyone with any information is asked to contact 101 or report online.

Alternatively, you can stay 100% anonymous by contacting the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via their untraceable online form.

For over 30 years, Crimestoppers has always kept its promise of anonymity to everyone who contacts them.

New phone scams and how to avoid them

Phone scams make up a big chunk of the £768 million of UK financial fraud in 2016. Find out more about the current phone scams so you can avoid them.

We look at some of the phone-based scams doing the rounds...

The fake tax demand scam

How the fake tax demand scam works

One of the most pernicious recent cons involves criminals calling people to say that they are getting in touch on behalf of HM Revenue & Customs. The fraudsters claim you owe HMRC thousands of pounds in taxes and ask for your bank details.

One 85-year-old woman was threatened with arrest if this supposed debt was not settled. The call was made even more frightening – and convincing – by the fact that the conman knew the victim’s address.

Luckily, the woman in question decided to contact her accountant rather than handing over any information.

On other occasions, fraudsters may claim that you’ve been sent a number of reminder letters, which you have, apparently, ignored.

HMRC says that it will never contact taxpayers by phone to obtain unpaid taxes. If someone contacts you claiming to be from an official body (or a bank), tell them you will call them back – but use the number on its website or on official correspondence, such as a tax reminder.

Make a note of the call details and number if possible and report any suspicious activity to the police's Action Fraud service on the number below.

The missed-call scam

How the missed-call scam works

Fraudsters call your mobile, but hang up as soon as it starts ringing. This then shows up on the phone as a missed call. Many people will ring back, in case it's urgent.

In fact, the number used by the criminals incurs premium-rate charges that can be as high as £15 a call, according to the police. These payments can be applied just for connecting the call, regardless of how long you stay on the line. But, in some cases, you will also hear a long recorded message to keep you on the phone for as long as possible so that the charges mount up. Never call a number back just because it called you. If a phone call is genuinely important, the caller should leave you a voicemail message.

The urgent PPI claim scam

How the PPI claim scam works

You get a call from a criminal who says that he or she is getting in touch on behalf of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the regulatory body, because you are eligible to make a claim for mis-sold payment protection insurance (PPI), but you must do so urgently.

The fraudster then says that an upfront fee needs to be paid before the claim can be processed. They either ask you to transfer money to a dodgy account, or take your bank details and then raid your account.

In fact, the actual deadline for claims is 29 August 2019 and the FCA has recently run a TV awareness campaign to make sure those with genuine cases don't miss out.

Cold-calling about PPI claims is nothing new, but pretending to be from the FCA certainly seems to be. The FCA would never contact individuals in this way.

Even legitimate PPI claim companies are worth avoiding as they tend to charge high fees that are often payable upfront.

If you think you have been mis-sold PPI, visit the Money Advice Service website (moneyadviceservice.org.uk) for details of how to claim compensation.

The too-good-to-be-true investment opportunity scam

How the investment opportunity scam works

Criminals cold-call people whom they believe have large sums of money to invest – typically those approaching retirement or current pensioners. They're taking advantage of new Government rules that allow easier access to pension savings to persuade you to invest in assets – for example, foreign property or fine wine – which they promise will increase dramatically in value.

These assets either don't exist or are hugely overpriced – and you lose some or all of your cash. Recent Government figures suggest that scammers have taken £43 million of pension cash in this way in the past three years.

Ministers have said they plan to ban cold-calling relating to investments in the near future, but there is no timetable yet.

Even if the practice were outlawed, some criminals would no doubt continue targeting people. So you should never agree to any sort of financial deal with a cold caller. As soon as you realise that someone is trying to persuade you to make an investment, just hang up: no genuine financial firm would market their services in this way.

The stolen card scam

How the stolen card scam works

You get a call from someone claiming to be a police officer. They say they have found a stolen bank card that appears to be yours, and ask you to confirm your account details.

You are then told to call another number, supposedly your bank's anti-fraud team, in order to prevent any losses. You're asked for more information on this second call so that eventually the fraudsters have all the details they need to raid your account.

Alternatively, the fake anti-fraud team will tell you that you should move your cash to a 'safe' account – which is actually controlled by the criminals.

The police would never call suspected crime victims to ask them to confirm their bank details. If your bank card has genuinely been stolen, contact your bank on an official number – one you obtain from its website or a recent bank statement, for example.

The post-accident text message scam

How the accident text message scam works

British police have uncovered a scam in which individuals receive a text message on their mobile phone – it comes from an unknown number, but appears to have been written by a close relative, typically a son or daughter.

The message says that the sender has been involved in an accident and is now in hospital, but has had to borrow a mobile phone to let you know.

You're asked to respond to the message urgently, then you're asked if you can pay for credit for the sender's mobile phone so that the 'accident victim' can make a voice call. However, the entire thing is of course a hoax and the criminal gets a free mobile top-up.

Protect yourself from the accident text message scam

According to Action Fraud, anyone who had really been involved in an accident would never be forced to pay for mobile-phone credit simply in order to speak to a close relative.

In fact, any text message you receive from an unknown number that claims to be from someone you know should ring alarm bells. Call your relative's actual phone number to check that their mobile genuinely is out of action.

The bank-transfer scam

How the bank-transfer scam works

Victims receive a mobile phone text message that purports to be from their bank. The message warns that some sort of fraudulent activity has been detected on their account and asks the recipient to transfer all of their money to a 'safe' account while the matter is being investigated.

The text message provides an account number and sort code for the transfer, and adds that the customer will be contacted once the matter has been resolved.

Needless to say, the message is bogus and the safe account belongs to the criminals who sent the text – who now can vanish with the contents of their victim's current account.

Protect yourself from the bank-transfer scam

It's important to understand that a bank would never ask its customers to move their money to a different account for security reasons. If fraud genuinely is suspected, it is well within any bank's powers to suspend activity on an account until such issues are dealt with.

It is possible that you may receive a genuine text message related to fraud. But the safest course of action is to call your bank on a publicly available number to find out if there really is a problem.

How to filter calls on your landline

BT customers can sign up – free – for Call Protect. It automatically diverts calls from numbers on BT's blacklist of nuisance callers, allows you to create your own blacklist, and to choose certain calls to send straight to junk voicemail, such as international numbers, withheld and unrecognised numbers. For more info, visit bt.com and search for Call Protect.

Local Crime Information

G4E - Ashwell, Hinxworth, Bygrave, Newnham and Caldecote

41/52723/19 – Criminal Damage

Between the 5th and 11th June 2019 in Newnham Road, Newnham two white vans were targeted whilst parked at the location. Both vehicles were substantially damaged, windscreens smashed.

41/55905/19 – Theft

Overnight on the 20th June a vehicle was parked in Bear Lane, Ashwell, and had both number plates stolen.

41/57169/19 – Criminal Damage

On 22nd June between 00.30 to 02.30am a residence in Silver Street had eggs thrown at the property which stained brickwork.

41/57833/19 – Fraud

On the 26th June between 12pm and 1630pm victim has received a telephone call on his landline, a male stated that he was from HMIC and convinced the victim that he owed £5,125.00 and that he was to get cash from the bank and a courier would collect from his home address. The bank intervened, police attended the victims home address. No attempt was made to collect the money from the home address.

G4D – Barley, Barkway, Reed, Therfield, Kelshall and Nuthampstead

41/53233/19 – Criminal Damage

On the 11th June overnight at Therfield Village Hall, Church Lane. Some ceiling tiles have been damaged, but no forced entry to the property was found.

41/53384/19 – Attempt Theft

Overnight on the 13th June in Church Lane Barley, offenders have entered a building site and attempted to start some plant machinery, in view to stealing them. They were unsuccessful.

41/55706/19 – Theft

On the 18th of June at 23.54hrs the cctv on the roof of St Faiths church recorded an activation. Offenders have got onto the roof and cut and rolled the lead on the roof, possibly disturbed, took one roll of lead with them and left two behind.

G3C - Sandon, Wallington, Rushden, Clothall and Weston

41/52798/19 – Burglary

Overnight on the 11th of June the Sports and Social Club on Roe Green, Sandon was targeted. It is believed that offenders attached a chain to the rear of their vehicle and on the doors of the club. They have then driven forwards and pulled the doors to the club open. Nothing was removed from inside the premises.

41/52811/19 – Theft

Overnight on the 11th of June in Roe Green, Sandon a number plate was stolen from a car. It is believed that burglary and this theft are linked.

Your local Neighbourhood Police Teams website

<http://snt.herts.police.uk/Teams.aspx?TeamID=G01>

Useful Links

<http://www.herts.police.uk/>

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

<http://www.stolenhorseregister.com/>

Royston Rural Neighbourhood Team Tel – 01438 757935