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North East

CRIMEALERT

Keeping Communities in the North East Safe

JUNE 2025



Welcome to the June 2025 edition of North East Crime Alert.

Produced by the Police Scotland North East Division Crime Reduction Team it's aim is to provide advice on how to spot the latest frauds and scams as well as how to keep your home and business safe.

In this edition of North East Crime Alert:

PC Steve Warden explains the work carried out by the four legged heroes of North East Division.

With summer now well and truly here we look at how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly.



Website

www.scotland.police.uk



Twitter

www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice



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We look at how criminals are pretending to be your mobile phone provider in order to obtain your personal details.

In the first of a new series looking at security we go back to basics to make sure you stay safe at home.

Read about how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud when booking your next holiday.

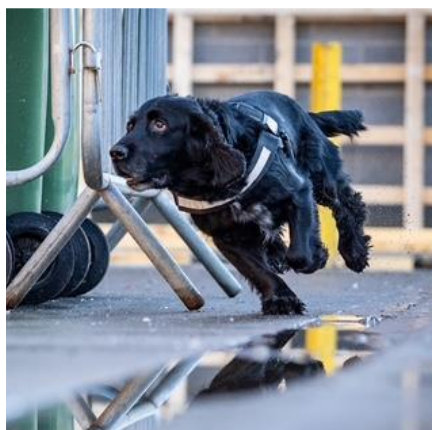
As well as a regular round-up of crime in the North East.

Criminals are using ever more sophisticated methods. By staying better informed and working in partnership we can ensure our communities continue to be a safe place to live and work.



Four Legged Heroes

By PC Steve Warden



Police Dogs have been a valuable asset within the UK Police service for over 100 years.

Their natural search ability, genetic excellence and ability to work in harmony with their human partners make them perfect for a role within the Police, to keep people safe.

In 1959 the first Police Dog Handler was identified for Aberdeen City Police. This was only the second Police Dog in Scotland following the success of a Police Dog based in Glasgow.

At this time PC Sandy Reid was allocated a German Shepherd Dog called 'Rennie' and completed a 12-week training course at the Metropolitan Police Service in London.

PC Reid and Police Dog (PD) Rennie proved their worth from the moment they returned to the Granite City and received various commendations from the Chief Constable, Lord Provost, Sheriffs and even Solicitors.

As a result of their success, the Police Dog Section grew to what it is today.

The Police Dog Section within the North East Police region covers a large area from Laurencekirk in the south to Forres in the north and everywhere in between. Due to the specialist nature of the role Police Dogs and handlers can often be deployed across Scotland.

Currently the Dog Section consists of 8 Police Dog Handlers and 16 Police Dogs based at Nelson Street, Aberdeen.

Within these numbers there is a variety of German Shepherd and Belgian Shepherd Dogs. These dogs are classed as General Purpose Police Dogs and carry out a variety of tasks including locating missing persons or locating those attempting to evade capture.

Dogs undergo a 13-week initial training course where they are assessed in a number of disciplines. On successful completion of this course, they are required to attend monthly continuation training with an instructor. This ensures standards are continually developed in readiness for any eventuality they may encounter within their Policing roles.

Working alongside the General Purpose Police Dogs, we have a variety of Springer Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels and Labradors who carry out specialist search roles including searching for controlled drugs, firearms, cash and explosives.

Police Dogs can be sourced from specialist breeders, other Police Forces or dog rescue centres. All dogs will be considered and assessed on their natural ability and attributes.

A Police Dog requires a natural search ability, but the most important trait is that is happy to work alongside its human handler. The bond between Police Dogs and their Handlers is overwhelming and is critical for success.

The Police Dogs are kennelled at the handler's home where this bond continues in the off-duty environment.

North East Division recently welcomed three new General Purpose Police Dogs into the Unit. Police Dogs Eva and Raid were sourced from a local German Shepherd breeder in Aberdeen as 8-week-old pups. They are now 18 months of age and have successfully passed their initial training course.

PD Abi also joins us, having been sourced via a specialist breeder in Holland.

More recently, PD Zeus and his Handler received a national bravery award for their actions at an incident in Aberdeen.

Although all these dogs are handled by Police Officers, they are owned by the Chief Constable and are treated as part of the Policing family. Welfare standards, vehicles, equipment, kennelling, veterinary care and training are of the highest standards to ensure our four legged heroes perform at their best at a moments notice.



PC Ross Joy and PD Eva



PC Stacey Townsend and PD Abi



PD Raid



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FRAUD... THE BASICS

The North East Crime Reduction Team would like to speak to your community group about frauds and scams.
If your organisation would like to learn about -

Spotting Frauds and Scams
Strong Passwords
Keeping Your Device Safe

Banking Online Safely
Wi-Fi Security
Social Media Safety

Get in touch by emailing
NorthEastCrimeReduction@scotland.police.uk

STAY SCEPTICAL - STOP AND THINK - COULD THIS BE A SCAM?

A photograph of a forest scene. In the foreground, there is a low, rustic stone wall covered in thick green moss. The wall is built from irregular, dark stones. To the left of the wall, there are some ferns and other green plants. In the background, there are many trees with dense foliage, mostly in shades of green and yellow, suggesting an autumn setting. The lighting is soft and natural, filtering through the trees.

Wild Camping in Scotland

How to Enjoy Nature Responsibly

Scotland's breathtaking landscapes offer a unique opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to experience wild camping in a way that few other places allow. Thanks to Scotland's progressive access laws, you can camp responsibly on most un-enclosed land. But with great freedom comes great responsibility and it's vital to understand how to minimise your impact on the environment and local communities.

The Right Way to Camp

Wild camping in Scotland is best done in small numbers and for no more than two or three nights in one spot. While it may seem harmless, repeated visits to the same areas can damage fragile ecosystems and disturb wildlife. To help preserve these natural spaces, campers are encouraged to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Managed campsites are a great option, especially in popular areas. They offer facilities and reduce pressure on the environment. VisitScotland provides a comprehensive list of campsites and accommodations. If you choose to camp elsewhere, be discreet - use small tents, stay away from buildings and roads and avoid enclosed fields with crops or livestock. Always leave no trace: take all your belongings and litter with you.

Cooking and Fire Safety

Despite Scotland's often damp climate, wildfires are a real threat. Open fires, including BBQs and fire bowls, can quickly get out of control, especially during dry spells. Campers should avoid lighting fires near forests, farmland, or historic sites and always heed fire danger warnings from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Instead, use a camping stove placed on a stable, non-flammable surface, away from tents and dry vegetation. Be vigilant while cooking and clean up thoroughly - broken glass and discarded cigarette ends can easily start fires. Resist the urge to collect firewood; deadwood is essential for many species and should be left undisturbed.

Answering Nature's Call

When nature calls, be prepared. If there are no public toilets nearby, bring a trowel, toilet paper, hand sanitiser and sealable bags. Urinate at least 30 metres from water sources and if you need to defecate, do so far from paths, buildings and animals. Either bury your waste in a shallow hole or bag it and carry it out.

Getting There and Parking

Before setting off, check for available parking. Use designated car parks and have a backup plan in case they're full. Remember, access rights don't extend to motor vehicles, so respect any restrictions landowners may have. Better yet, consider using public transport, cycling, or walking to your campsite.

Seasonal Restrictions

Some areas, like Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, have seasonal byelaws that limit wild camping. In these zones, camping is only allowed in designated campsites or with a permit. Always plan and check local regulations before your trip.

By following these guidelines, you can enjoy Scotland's wild beauty while helping to protect it for future generations.

Visit the Scottish Outdoor Access Guide for the rights and responsibilities of individuals regarding outdoor access in Scotland -

www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot



Police Scotland and Partners will be carrying out regular patrols in hot-spot areas throughout the summer.



Protect yourself from too good
to be true mobile phone deals

‘If you receive a unsolicited cold call, hang up and contact your mobile phone provider or the company in question directly, using a verified phone number or their official website.’

Nowadays, it's increasingly common to receive unsolicited phone calls from unknown numbers. While some of these calls may be legitimate, many are attempts by fraudsters to trick you into parting with your personal information or money.

One particularly prevalent scam involves fraudsters posing as representatives from well-known mobile phone or internet providers. These scammers often offer enticing deals, such as significant discounts on mobile phone contracts or free upgrades to the latest devices. They may sound highly convincing and knowledgeable, often mentioning current deals that make the offer sound legitimate.

The Initial Call

You receive a call from someone claiming to be from your mobile phone provider or a similar company. They offer a seemingly too-good-to-be-true deal, such as a free phone or a substantial discount on your monthly contract.

The Bait

Excited by the prospect of a great deal, you are persuaded to provide personal information, such as your name, address, date of birth as well as confirming banking details.

Criminals then place an order for a mobile phone with genuine companies using your details and have it shipped to your address.

The Hook

A few days later, you receive another call from the same person. They apologise for a mistake made by a colleague and inform you that the wrong phone was sent in error. They request that you ‘return’ the phone to a specific address, usually residential, with no connection to the mobile phone company.

The Scam

Unknown to you, the provided address belongs to the scammers themselves. By returning the phone, you're essentially handing over a valuable item to the fraudsters which you may be left liable for.

How to Protect Yourself

Always approach unsolicited calls with caution, especially if the caller offers deals that seem too good to be true.

If you receive a unsolicited cold call, hang up and contact your mobile phone provider or the company in question directly, using a verified phone number or their official website. Wait before making the call or use another line.

Never share personal details, such as your full name, address, date of birth, or bank account information, with anyone over the phone unless you're absolutely certain of their identity.

Only contact your mobile network provider on a number you know to be correct. For example:

191 for Vodafone	4455 for Tesco Mobile
150 for EE	789 for Virgin Mobile
333 for Three	150 for Sky Mobile.
202 for O2	

If you receive a device that you did not order or expect, contact the genuine sender immediately. The details for this will be within the parcel.

Never post a device directly to a given address. All genuine Mobile Network Operators send out a jiffy bag for you to return without you incurring additional cost.

If you believe you've been a victim of a phone scam, report it to your bank and contact the Police.

Remember, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Home Security



When we're at home we like to feel safe. We want to keep you that way and it is important for homes to be physically secure to deter criminal activity and reduce crime. Here are a few simple steps that you can take to ensure that your home stays safe and secure and reduce the likelihood of you falling victim to housebreaking.

The majority of housebreakings occur when there is nobody at home; most are not planned but committed by opportunists.

Easily accessible windows, including easily accessible roof lights and roof windows, should meet Police Preferred Specification standards.

If you have a door connecting the garage to the house make sure this has the same level of security as your front door.

Ensure all keys, including car keys, are out of sight and away from the letterbox. If you have a vehicle with keyless entry make sure both sets of keys are kept within a Faraday Pouch.

Always keep valuables like tablets and laptops out of sight from windows.

Store any high value items such as jewellery and passports in a properly secured and insurance approved safe.

Make your valuables less attractive to thieves by using a property or police recognised forensic marking solution – particularly for valuable tools and bikes that are stored in outbuildings and garage.

Install CCTV linked to your mobile device.

In the evening shut the curtains and leave lights on.

Keep ladders and tools stored away; don't leave them outside where they could be used to break into your home.

Always lock your doors and windows, even when you are in your home, remembering to double-lock UPVC doors (lift the handle and turn the key).

Consider joining or forming a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or sign up for alerts by visiting **www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk**

For further advice regarding home security and for a list of products that meet Police Preferred Specification standards visit **www.securedbydesign.com**



Holiday Scams



Whatever kind of holiday you're thinking about, chances are you'll be searching for and booking it, online. Read our advice to make sure you don't fall for a scam.



Whether you're looking for an all-inclusive holiday in the sun, a cruise, flights or a staycation, getting a great deal may be more important than usual. It also means that you could be a target for a fraudster taking advantage of the fact that you really want to get away.

Fraudsters use fake websites, listings, emails, advertisements, social media posts, texts and phone calls to trick you into buying and paying for what you think is a genuine holiday.

Legitimate package holidays should ensure your money is protected and that the online travel agent or tour operator takes responsibility for all their suppliers.

When booking a flight-inclusive package, ensure that the holiday is protected by ATOL, which ensures your money is safe.

Be wary of unusually cheap holidays/flights or high deposits.

Confirm that accommodation really exists by looking for independent reviews and recommendations. If you can, call and speak to the owner/agent directly to try to ascertain if the person you're booking the holiday with is authorised to sell it to you. If the number is not provided, email and request it. Ask questions to see if they have knowledge of the area.

Check reviews on TripAdvisor or similar sites.

If you're booking accommodation via Airbnb, keep communications and payment on the Airbnb platform. Don't be tempted off it as this may indicate an attempt at fraud. Read Airbnb's safety advice for guests.

Never pay for holidays or travel by bank transfer to a company or person you haven't had personal experience of buying from previously. If you do and it's a fraud, you may never get your money back. Paying by credit card means more chance of getting your money back if something goes wrong.

Make sure travel agents and tour operators you book holidays and travel through are members of trade associations such as ABTA or ATOL by checking on these bodies' websites.

To check if a website you plan to book a holiday on is likely to be legitimate or fraudulent, enter its address at www.getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite.

Check terms and conditions prior to making any payment.

Before paying online or providing any confidential details, type in the website address you know to be correct instead of following a link and ensure the payment page is secure (begins with 'https' and has a locked padlock in the browser window frame).

Keep confirmations and payment receipts and check bank and credit card statements for irregular entries.

If you've lost money to fraud, always report it immediately to your bank, as this will increase your chance of getting your money back.

For full information on booking and paying for holidays and travel online with safety and confidence, visit www.getsafeonline.org, select 'Protecting Yourself' then 'Holiday & Travel Booking.'

Payment Diversion



We're familiar with fraudulent emails about winning a Ferrari or inheriting millions from a long-lost relative. Other fraud types are more specific and involve criminals deliberately targeting individuals. Payment Diversion Fraud (PDF) also known as Business Email Compromise (BEC) or Mandate Fraud, involves criminals creating or amending invoices and diverting payments to bank accounts under their own control. They target both businesses and individuals.

PDF affects all types of businesses and individuals. However, due to the targeted nature of this fraud type, small and medium sized businesses, which often have less comprehensive IT security, are particularly vulnerable. Individuals purchasing houses and are involved in large financial transactions are also at risk.

Protect yourself against PDF

Have you been asked to urgently process a payment that is large or unusual?

Have you been asked to change the bank details of an existing supplier or to set up a new supplier?

Is the language used in the email inconsistent with that of the genuine sender?

If you have any doubt about the transaction then do not transfer the money. Protect yourself by double-checking the payment request via an additional method using details from another source (such as text message, phone call or in-person).

Criminals are experts at impersonating people, organisations and the police. They spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down for just a moment. Stop and think. It could protect you and your money.

Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam.

Crime Alert

A selection of crimes affecting residents from across Grampian

Investment Frauds

In two separate incidents Aberdeenshire residents invested in fraudulent investment companies advertised on Facebook. The victims lost five and six figure sums respectively.

Rent Scam

An Aberdeen resident was contacted by scammers claiming that she had overpaid rent and was due a refund. She passed on her bank details and lost £900.

Sextortion

An Aberdeen victim met a female fraudster on an adult dating app and shared explicit images. The female threatened to share the images and the victim paid £3,000.

Investment Fraud

An Aberdeen based student replied to an advert online from a digital marketing company for reviewing products. The ad promised huge returns but was a scam. He lost £9000.

Banking Scam

An Aberdeen resident was contacted by scammers claiming to be her bank. They arranged to call at her house to uplift her i-pad in order to install 'fraud prevention software.' They collected the i-pad and never returned.

Facebook Marketplace Scam

An Aberdeen resident placed a computer for sale in Marketplace. A buyer agreed to purchase it and paid £900 in cash. When he took the cash to the bank, he discovered the notes were fake.

HMRC Scam

An Aberdeen resident was contacted by scammers claiming to be from HMRC. They stated he was due unpaid taxes from working abroad. He paid the money and on checking found it was a scam. He lost £3700.

Banking Fraud

An Aberdeen resident was contacted on her mobile by scammers claiming to be from her bank. They advised there was an issue at her branch and she should transfer £6000 and withdraw £7000. On attendance at the bank, she discovered it was scam and had lost £6000.

Gift Card Scams

An Aberdeen resident was contacted by phone and told he was one in ten people selected to receive an American ATM card with 1 million dollars on it. He had to purchase gift cards in order to claim his prize, there was no prize and he lost £2000.

Having been duped by fraudsters an elderly lady believed she was paying her household bills using Steam gift cards. Over the course of 12 months she lost in excess of £11,000.

Push-Payment Fraud

An Aberdeen resident was contacted by fraudsters claiming to be from her bank, they advised she needed to transfer her funds into a safe account whilst investigations were carried out. She did this and lost £28,000.

Email Interception

An Aberdeen firm had their e-mail account hacked. Scammers intercepted communications with a client. The company paid a fake invoice sent by the scammers and lost £49,000.

Rural Theft

A sheep management system worth £8,000 was stolen from a farm in the Cuminestown area.

Gift Card Fraud

An elderly Moray resident lost nearly £20,000 after being duped into sending Gift Card codes to who he believed was his Solicitor. On speaking to his Bank he discovered it was a fraud.

WhatsApp Scam

A Moray resident lost £4000 after being contacted via WhatsApp by a suspect pretending to be his daughter. The suspect asked for help paying an invoice. The victim paid the money and subsequently discovered it was a scam.

Ambulance Base Break-In

The Scottish Ambulance station based at Leancoil Hospital, Forres was broken into.

Commercial Housebreaking

A commercial property was broken into on Victoria Street, Craigellachie. On the same day a commercial property was broken into on the High Street, Rothes.

Keeping Our Communities in the North East Safe

Police Scotland's North East Division covers rural and urban areas in Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The division has five territorial command areas which have their own dedicated Area Commander, who is responsible for the daily policing function. Each command area is served by a number of community policing teams whose activities are built around the needs of the local community. These teams respond to local calls and look for long term solutions to key issues. They are assisted by the division's Crime Reduction Unit who deliver against

Force and local priorities in a number of areas, including physical and social crime prevention, supporting and enhancing community engagement and creating and sustaining strong and effective partnership working.

Website

www.scotland.police.uk

X (Formerly Twitter)

@PSOSNorthEast

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
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