



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

POILEAS ALBA

North East

CRIMEALERT

Keeping Communities in the North East Safe



AUGUST 2025



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

Produced by the Police Scotland North East Division Crime Reduction Team its 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:

We look at how thieves are targeting renewable energy sites across Scotland.

Police Scotland tackles retail crime with the launch of a new task force.

Aberdeen is named the 'Friendly City' following the Tall Ships Race.

Police Scotland and Forestry Land Scotland clamp down on the illegal use of motorbikes.

Mobile Banks and the North East Crime Reduction Team bring fraud advice to North East rural communities.

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.



Website

www.scotland.police.uk



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RURAL

Thieves Target North East Wind Turbines

Police in Aberdeenshire are investigating after thieves stole copper wiring from wind farms near Stonehaven and Laurencekirk.

Tens of thousands of pounds worth of copper was stolen during two incidents which took place in July.

The first break-in happened at Tullo Wind Farm, near Laurencekirk where three wind turbines were forced open.

The second incident was at Meikle Carewe Wind Farm near Stonehaven

Detective Sergeant Kim Patterson, Kittybrewster Police Station, said 'We believe these thefts are linked and that those responsible, due to the remoteness of both areas, would need to have used a fairly large vehicle.'

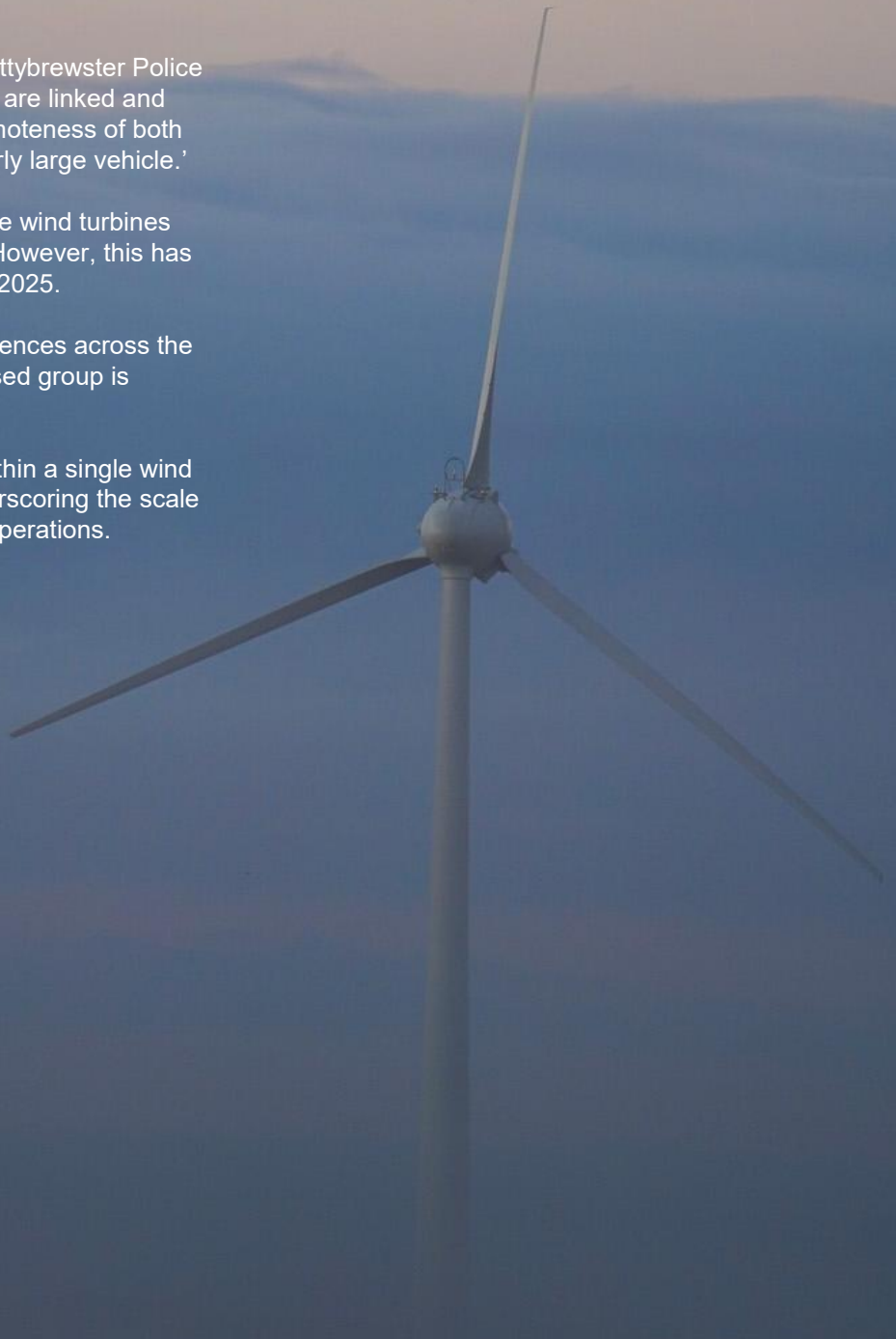
The theft of copper cabling from inside wind turbines has historically been rare in the UK. However, this has changed since the beginning of April 2025.

There have been several reported offences across the UK since April, suggesting an organised group is targeting the industry.

In some incidents several turbines within a single wind farm complex were broken into, underscoring the scale and potential co-ordination of these operations.

Once thieves have gained entry, the turbine door is forcibly opened and the electricity supply is isolated to eliminate the risk of electrocution. The copper cabling is then cut and removed. Thieves appear undeterred by the fact that the turbines are active at the time of entry, indicating a high level of confidence and familiarity with the infrastructure.

Anyone living near a wind turbine site is encouraged to report any suspicious activity to Police immediately.





Retail Crime

How a new Police Scotland Taskforce is aiming to address shoplifting

In a significant step to address shoplifting, the Scottish Government has committed £3 million to fund the Police Scotland Retail Crime Taskforce, which was officially launched in April this year, empowering Police Scotland to protect businesses across the country.

Detective Chief Inspector Jackie Knight said 'We must reduce retail crime and send a clear message to our communities, and those responsible for these offences, that such crimes will not be tolerated.'

To achieve this, the work of the Police is guided by the '4Ps':

Prevent: Taking action to stop people from committing retail crime in the first place.

Pursue: Actively investigating crime to identify offenders and bring them to justice.

Protect: Working directly with retailers to strengthen businesses against crime.

Prepare: Helping retailers and staff mitigate the impact of crime when it does occur.

The North East Crime Reduction Team are working as part of this strategy to provide advice to retailers across the Division. The team of specially trained officers are on hand to guide retailers on everything from changing store layouts to reduce the opportunity for crime through to providing inputs to staff on how to identify suspected shoplifters.

Tackling this issue requires a strategy that blends technology, staff training, store design and community collaboration.

Understanding Motivations

Shoplifting isn't always driven by greed or organised crime. Economic hardship, addiction and mental health issues are common factors. Recognising these motivations helps tailor prevention strategies - such as signposting support services or working with local outreach programmes.

Advice for Retailers

Surveillance and Technology

Strategically placed cameras and signage act as both deterrents and tools for identifying offenders. High-definition footage is crucial for police investigations.

Tagging merchandise with anti-theft devices and installing detection terminals at exits can dramatically reduce theft.

Some retailers now use facial recognition software to identify repeat offenders.

Staff Training and Customer Engagement

A simple 'hello' can deter potential thieves. It signals that staff are alert and observant.

Employees should be trained to spot signs like nervousness, excessive handling of merchandise, or frequent visits without purchases.

Staff must know how to respond safely and legally if they suspect theft.

Store Layout and Design

Clear sightlines across the shop floor reduce blind spots where theft can occur.

High-value items should be placed in well-monitored areas or behind counters.

A clean, organised and well designed store suggests strong management and surveillance, discouraging opportunistic theft.

Balancing Security and Experience

While robust security is vital, it mustn't alienate genuine customers. Friendly service, clear policies, and respectful surveillance help maintain a welcoming atmosphere while keeping theft at bay.

Retailers Against Crime

Retailers Against Crime (RAC) are a national, not for profit crime partnership. The organisation aims to detect and prevent crime by sharing information on local and travelling offenders to its members in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North West of England.

Working with police forces across the UK, RAC's team of specialised staff analyse offenders, identify their methods, their associates and locations targeted enabling them to forewarn members who can then prevent crime before it happens.

If you would like an officer from the North East Crime Reduction Team to visit your retail business please email us at:

NorthEastCrimeReduction@scotland.police.uk



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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 low-angle, vertical shot of a tall ship's mast and complex rigging. The mast is a light-colored wooden pole with numerous horizontal crossbeams. A dense network of dark ropes and lines crisscrosses the frame. Several colorful signal flags are attached to the rigging, including red and white, blue and white, yellow, and red and blue. Two sailors are visible on a crossbeam in the middle of the frame; one is wearing a white shirt and the other a dark shirt. A white spherical object with the word "SAILOR" is visible on the left side of the mast. The background is a clear, pale blue sky.

The Tall Ships 2025



With hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the globe flocking to Aberdeen, officer's from Police Scotland were on hand, keeping people safe throughout this very special event. No arrests were made during the four day festival with Aberdeen being named the 'Friendly City.'

Chief Inspector Darren Bruce was in charge of planning and delivering policing of the event. He said 'This has been an amazing event and a real opportunity to showcase Aberdeen and policing in Aberdeen.'

Police and partners have been involved in the planning process for almost two years and to deliver an event of this scale is something everyone involved should be proud of.

Our plan was always to take the opportunity to engage with those attending the event positively, while getting across our message about safety and security.'

A close-up photograph of a person's lower body and a teal mountain bike. The person is wearing a grey backpack with 'FLASH 18' printed on it, a high-visibility vest with orange, yellow, and green sections, and light green cargo shorts. The bike is teal with 'MERIDA' written vertically on the frame. A black water bottle is attached to the frame. The background is a blurred green forest.

Summer Bike Security

Whether you're a keen roadie, bike packer or regularly hit the trails at Glenlivet or Pittfichie, the cycling scene in Grampian has never been more exciting.

So if you're hitting the trails or coffee shops this summer, or storing your bike at home, follow our simple guide to keeping your bike safe.



Register It

Register your bike on a secure, Secured by Design (SBD) recognised national database. The police check these databases if they find bikes in the possession of a criminal, or in the street, to identify the rightful owner.

A bike carrying a database stamp is a highly effective, visible deterrent to bike thieves as they know that if they are caught with a registered bike they will be arrested, as the rightful owner can be traced by the police within seconds.

Record It

Remember to record as many details of your bike as you can such as the make/model, size, colour, frame number plus any other distinguishing features and take a photo.

Security Mark It

Security marking your bike using a SBD recognised forensic asset marking or etching kit is another highly effective, visible deterrent to thieves and an established method of reducing theft.

Double-lock it, secure it and lock the lot

It can take thieves as little as a few seconds to cut through some locks that haven't achieved the Police Preferred Specification, so use two good quality locks, at least one of which is a D-lock.

Secure your bike as close to stands as possible to give thieves little or no room to manoeuvre.

Lock the frame and both wheels to the cycle parking stand. Locks are considered more vulnerable when they come in to contact with the ground, so keep them off the floor.

Remove the removable bits

Take parts with you that are easy to remove such as the saddle, lights and possibly even the wheels.

Park secure

Lock your bike at recognised secure cycle parking. It should be well lit and covered by CCTV. Secured cycle hubs and racks are provided by local councils and business, however, while some of these products are security tested some are not, so be wary.

Avoid leaving your bike in isolated or dimly lit places, always leave your bike where a potential thief will have to perform in public.

Electric Bikes are very expensive, so try not to leave in the same place on a regular basis.



Keep your bike safe when travelling by car, van or campervan

While travelling to a sportive, trail centre or to meet up with friends keeping your bikes safe while on the roof rack or rear carrier of a vehicle is as important as keeping it secure at home. An opportunist thief will only take seconds to steal your bike when you park your vehicle.

Always pay attention to where you park and if possible ensure it is parked in a well-lit, busy location where the actions of any thief would be visible to people.

Ensure that you have visible, good quality locks on your bikes and remove the saddles whilst travelling.

Safety begins at home

Statistics show that bike thefts are most likely to occur in a semi-private location near the victim's home; this includes outside areas on the premises and garages around, but not connected to, the home.

Take the same care to lock your bike securely at home as you would on the street.

Ground anchors can be used together with shed or garage alarms, which can be connected to your house alarm system.

Doorbell and external security cameras can also be used as a deterrent to thieves.

Consider bringing your bike indoors if you don't have appropriately secure external storage.

Secure By Design Bike Security Products

Sold Secure is the UK test house for bicycle locks; they test to four security grades:

Bronze

These products typically offer defence against the opportunist thief.

Silver

These products offer a compromise between security and cost.

Gold

These products are aimed at those mid-to-high level value bicycles.

Diamond

These products provide the highest level of security aimed at a high value bike and e-bikes.

Secured By Design is the only way for companies to obtain police recognition for security-related products in the UK.

A man wearing a grey cap and a dark jacket is standing next to a silver car at night. He is holding a key fob and appears to be locking the car door. The car's door is open, and the interior is visible. The background is dark with some blurred lights, suggesting a parking lot or street at night.

Keep Your Vehicle Secure
Lock-Up at Night to Deter Thieves

In our busy lives, it's easy to overlook simple security measures. Even small preventative actions can significantly reduce crime in our communities.

Unfortunately, we've seen a concerning trend in the North East over recent months. Numerous unlocked vehicles have been targeted, with thieves making off with everything from tools to laptops.

That's why it's absolutely vital to protect yourself from becoming a victim of theft. Get into the habit of locking your car every time you leave it and always ensure your windows are fully closed.

Vehicle break-ins are often committed by opportunistic thieves looking for an easy target. Unlocked vehicles offer quick and quiet access to valuables. Whether it's electronics, personal belongings, or even just loose change, anything left inside can catch a thief's eye. Simply put, an unlocked car is an open invitation for criminals.

Why Locking Your Vehicle Matters

A locked car is a much less attractive target for thieves. Breaking into a locked vehicle takes more time and dramatically increases a thief's risk of getting caught. Most criminals prefer easy targets. By locking your vehicle, you safeguard any items inside.

Stolen items can unfortunately lead to other crimes. For example, if a thief steals your garage door opener, they now have easy access to your home. Preventing the initial theft can stop a chain reaction of potential criminal activity.

Simple Tips for Vehicle Security

Always Lock Your Vehicle

This might seem obvious, but it's the most effective deterrent. Even if you're parked in your own driveway or garage, make it a habit to lock your car every time you leave it. Don't just listen for the click of the lock; always check for your lights flashing or mirrors closing and better still, give the door handle a quick tug to be certain it's locked.

Remove Valuables

Never leave anything valuable in plain sight. If you absolutely must leave items in your vehicle, store them out of sight in the boot or a locked glove compartment.

Park in Well-Lit Areas

Thieves prefer to operate under the cover of darkness. Parking under streetlights or near motion-activated lights can make your vehicle less appealing.

Activate Your Alarm System

If your vehicle has an alarm, make sure it's armed. If not, consider installing a car alarm or a motion-activated dashcam. The noise and attention they create can be enough to scare off potential thieves.

Be Vigilant

Keep an eye out for any suspicious activity in your neighbourhood and report it to the Police. Community awareness plays a huge role in deterring crime.

Locking your vehicle at night is a simple in crime prevention. You can protect your belongings, significantly reduce the likelihood of theft and contribute to a safer community.

Remember - lock up, stay vigilant and help keep your vehicle and your neighbourhood safe.



RURAL

Police clamp down on illegal use of motorbikes and quad bikes in forests



Police will carry out patrols as part of a clampdown on the illegal use of motorbikes and quad bikes across Aberdeenshire forests.

Officers will be patrolling a number of sites run by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) to curb the illegal behaviour.

FLS said there have been repeated incidents of unauthorised access by people on motorbikes and quad bikes in Fetteresso and Durris Forests, and they are asking the public to report illegal activity.

The use of a motorbike, a quad, or a 4x4 in the forest is an offence.

Fiona Robertson, area visitor services manager, said using any motor vehicle on FLS-managed trails is illegal and 'potentially hazardous' for other forest users.

'This includes a high number of walkers, cyclists, and horse riders; not to mention they are working forests with live forestry operations in areas,' she said.

Ms Robertson added that the speed at which the people in the vehicles travel is putting others' safety at risk from injury and negatively impacting surrounding residents.

'It's really important that nobody puts themselves in danger by confronting anyone, but if people can pass us registration numbers, dates and times if they witness these types of behaviours, we can inform Police Scotland.

'We want people to enjoy their visits to our forest, but this must be done responsibly and with consideration for other people and the law.'

Police officers from Stonehaven will be making regular rounds of the forests to target those involved in dangerous and illegal behaviour.

Inspector Mark Young said those identified as using the vehicles in the forests face prosecution, fines and bans.

'Local officers will be carrying out patrols in and around the forest during the summer months in response to the illegal use of motorbikes and quad bikes in Fetteresso forest' he said.

'This behaviour is not acceptable; it is illegal and dangerous. Those identified face prosecution, fines, driving bans, and vehicles may be seized and destroyed.

We work closely with partner agencies to identify offenders with information from the public vital in providing us with descriptions of people or vehicles involved.'

Registration numbers and details of incidents can be emailed to enquiries.east@forestryandland.gov.scot or to Police Scotland by dialling 101.



Fraud Prevention on the Move

Mobile Banks and the North East Crime Reduction Team bring fraud advice to North East rural communities.



In the rolling landscapes of Moray and Aberdeenshire, where picturesque villages and towns dot the countryside the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has found a way to keep financial services within reach using mobile banking units.

North East Crime Reduction Team joins the journey

In a proactive partnership, the North East Crime Reduction Team accompanied the mobile banks on their rounds during June and July to engage with customers and offer timely advice on staying safe in a digital world.

As fraud and cybercrime continue to evolve, rural communities can be particularly vulnerable. Criminals often target isolated individuals with scams ranging from phishing emails to phone-based impersonation fraud.

Face-to-Face Advice on Fraud Prevention

At each stop, officers set up alongside the mobile bank, chatting with customers as they queue or exit the van. Their presence is friendly and informative - not only do they offer leaflets and resources, but they also answer questions and share real-life examples of scams currently circulating in the area.

The Team speak with customers about:

Online safety tips such as using strong passwords and enabling two-factor authentication'

Recognising phishing attempts via email, text, or phone
Avoiding investment fraud and romance scams.

Protecting personal information on social media and public Wi-Fi.

The team also highlights the importance of reporting suspicious activity and encourages residents to raise concerns with the Banks and Police Scotland if they believe they've been targeted.

The initiative has been particularly well received by older residents, many of whom appreciate the chance to speak directly with police officers in a relaxed setting. It's not uncommon for these conversations to lead to revelations about near-misses or successful scams, allowing officers to intervene and offer support.

Many customers attend the mobile branch to seek reassurance from banking staff following suspicious telephone calls or e-mails. They are often quizzed on a number of subjects from telephone calls received to text messages about missed parcels. The staff are only too happy to offer advice or point the public in the right direction for help.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud contact your bank immediately and then report the incident to Police.

Online Shopping



Criminals are using social media adverts to lure shoppers into buying items that are either fake, poor quality or simply don't exist. These 'rogue retailers' are getting increasingly sophisticated, using tools like AI to create convincing images and product descriptions.

Many of these scams involve low-quality goods, often shipped from overseas and if you fall victim, getting your money back can be incredibly difficult.

How to Spot and Avoid a Shopping Scam

It can be hard to tell a legitimate offer from a scam, but by following these steps, you can significantly reduce your risk.

Assess how reasonable the offer is. If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Check for signs of a newly created website. Use a domain checker like who.is to see when the website was created. Recently created sites should be viewed with suspicion.

Use image search tools. Tools like TinEye or Google's reverse image search can help you determine if product images have been used elsewhere on the internet, which can be a red flag.

Look for a physical address. Reputable online businesses should list a physical address, phone number, or email address for contact.

Check for clear shipping and returns policies. A legitimate company will have these policies clearly stated on their website.

Read reviews from multiple sources. Don't rely on reviews only on the seller's site. Look at independent review platforms to get a balanced view.

Your Rights When Shopping Online

Regardless of where an item is shipped from, if you're shopping online from the UK, you have rights under the Consumer Rights Act 2015. This includes the right to a refund if an item isn't as described, isn't of satisfactory quality or isn't fit for purpose. You also have a 14-day 'cooling-off period' for online orders, allowing you to return items within 14 days of receipt, even if you simply change your mind.

However, enforcing these rights can be challenging if the seller is based overseas. That's why we strongly advise you to:

Pay by credit card

This offers extra protection under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act for purchases over £100.

Consider chargeback claims

If you pay by debit card or credit card for goods under £100, you may be able to make a chargeback claim through your bank.

Use PayPal's Buyer Protection

If you pay via PayPal, their Buyer's Protection can help you request a refund.

Reporting Scams

If you encounter a suspicious advert on social media, you can report it directly to the platform by selecting the three dots in the top right corner of the post and choosing 'report.' Suspicious websites can be reported to the National Cyber Security Centre.

If you lose money to a scam, contact your bank immediately using the number on the back of your bank card and then report it to the Police.

Crime Alert

A selection of crimes affecting residents from across Grampian

Theft

A driver left their vehicle unlocked briefly after attending at a local jeweller. On their return someone had entered the vehicle and stole a recently serviced watch valued at £6,000.

Investment Scam

An Aberdeen resident invested money after seeing a fraudulent advert on TV. They were then contacted by a company claiming to be able to return his money. This was also a scam and the victim lost £40,000 in total.

Flight Scam

Having issues with a cancelled flight, an Aberdeen resident received a call from who they believed was a representative of the company. The callers were scammers and persuaded the victim to provide them with banking details. The victim lost £1,500.

Push-Payment Fraud

A self-employed Aberdeen resident was contacted by scammers claiming to be from their bank. They advised of fraudulent activity on the victims account. The victim transferred £8,000 to a 'safe account' and lost all the money.

Sextortion

An Aberdeen victim met a female fraudster on an online chatroom. After a brief period, they shared explicit images. The female threatened to share the images, so the victim paid £1,500.

Job Scam

A foreign student applied for an online job after completing their degree. They paid upfront for training and sponsorship fees. It was a scam and they lost £8,000.

Marketplace Scam

An Aberdeen resident placed a camera for sale on Marketplace. A 'buyer' agreed to purchase it for £900. They provided fake proof of payment via Paypal and the camera was posted. The seller was never paid and lost the camera.

Prize scam

An Aberdeen resident was contacted via Facebook by scammers, claiming they had won £200,000. Over a period of weeks they were scammed into buying gift cards in order to claim the prize. The victim lost £15,000 in total.

Stolen E-bike

A cyclist secured their £2750 e-bike to a stairwell within their block flats overnight with a very poor-quality combination lock. When they returned, both the bike and lock were gone.

Theft by Housebreaking

A home on Shearer Avenue, Buckie was broken into. Several vintage model cars were taken from the property.

Fake Job Scam

An Aberdeenshire resident lost just over £7,000 to a fake job scam. The victim received a text from an

unknown number on WhatsApp offering a job working from home. The victim was told how much money would be made for each investment put into the scheme. The victim made various investments before it became apparent it was a scam.

Million Dollar Prize Scam

A Moray resident lost a five-figure sum of money to scammers after being informed he had won £3 million dollars. Despite the victim declining the offer he was told the money was now in the UK and he was responsible for paying import taxes. The requests for money continued over a period of months until the victim informed his daughter who contacted Police.

Cable Theft, Aboyne

An electrical contractor near Aboyne had over £2,600 of cable stolen from their business yard.

Caravan Theft

A caravan valued at £23,000 was stolen from a storage facility in Aberdeenshire. Thieves used a BMW X3 with cloned number plates to carry out the theft.

Livestock Worrying

A sheep was killed and two others injured during a dog attack incident on a farm near Rothienorman.

Concert Ticket Fraud

An Aberdeenshire resident lost over £1200 in an online Oasis ticket fraud.

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

Twitter

www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
NorthEastPoliceDivision](https://www.facebook.com/NorthEastPoliceDivision)

North East Division Crime Reduction Team

Moray

PC Richard Russell
richard.russell@scotland.police.uk

Aberdeen City

PC Mark Irvine
mark.irvine@scotland.police.uk

Aberdeenshire

PC Mike Urquhart
michael.urquhart@scotland.police.uk



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