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***Royston Rural Watch, March 2021***

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

**On the Beat** –

**Spring security for homes and gardens**

**22 Mar 2021**

•Operation Gnome, spring crime prevention campaign, launched

•Residents given advice on keeping homes and gardens secure

Hertfordshire Constabulary is launching its annual spring crime prevention campaign, Operation Gnome, to provide advice to help residents make their homes, gardens and outbuildings more secure this spring.

As lockdown restrictions ease, many people will be returning to work or spending more time outdoors, which will give criminals opportunities to target homes.

At this time of year when the weather is starting to improve, people tend to spend more time in their gardens using gardening and leisure equipment. Burglars are also on the look-out for valuable equipment and tools left out or stored in sheds and outbuildings that often have little or no security.

Inspector Nicola Dean from Hertfordshire Constabulary’s Crime Reduction Team, said: “During the lockdowns burglaries have remained very low as homes have been mostly occupied. However, as more people venture out the risk increases and we often see an increase in thefts from gardens, sheds and garages, during the spring. We are recommending that everyone takes some basic security measures to make sure their gardens and outbuildings are secure. Leaving tools and gardening equipment lying around in your garden can attract thieves, as they are valuable and could also be used to break into your home.

“Make sure any tools that could assist a burglar, like ladders, trowels, hammers etc, are locked away and make sure outbuildings are as secure as possible, with strong locks or even an alarmed padlock. Dusk till dawn security lights and planting defensive plants like roses along your borders and keeping fences in good condition will make your home even safer. Remember to close windows and lock doors when you are finished outside and before going to bed, even when the weather gets warmer.”

These are some of the ways you can make your garden and outbuildings more secure:

• Always lock your shed, preferably with two 'hasp and staple' locks (one near the top and one near the bottom of the door) or use or an alarmed padlock

• Secure your rear garden by locking entry gates with a padlock

• Burglars can use garden tools to break in, so make sure you securely lock away any tools after use

• Ensure boundary fences are secure and in good condition. Spiky plants along garden boundaries are good additional deterrents

• Tools and gardening equipment should be visibly marked with your postcode and house number - this can deter thieves and help police identify the rightful owner

• Remember to lock your garage door securely. Metal ‘up and over’ doors can be secured with extra locks fitted either side and/or a floor-mounted locking ‘T’ bar with a closed shackle padlock. Wooden garage doors can be secured with two substantial ‘hasps and staple’ locks and closed shackle padlocks (your local DIY store can advise on the most secure options)

• Join Neighbourhood Watch or Allotment Watch to help reduce crime in your local area

• Make access to the rear of your property difficult, keep rear/side gates closed and locked ensure boundary walls/fences are in good repair

• Wheelie bins secured so they cannot be moved or used as climbing aid

• Planting of defensive spiky plants under windows – Berberis, Roses, Pyracantha

• Most bicycles are stolen from home so ensure your sheds, outbuildings and garages are secure. Consider installing ground anchors if you have a concrete floor. If not, look for security rated products specifically for wooden and metal sheds.

• Take extra security precautions for storing expensive bikes, it is recommended that they are security marked and registered with Bike Register on line.

For more detailed security advice, please visit our crime prevention pages via the web or contact us on 101.

You can provide your feedback on what matters most to you about policing in Hertfordshire, even if you haven’t called the force communications room, by texting the word ‘echo’, followed by your thoughts to 66099\* or by visiting www.herts.police.uk/echo.

'Be vigilant’ message following catalytic converter thefts

•Please report suspicious activity’ message to residents.

•Catalytic converters being stolen from vehicles across Hertfordshire.

Officers are urging people to be vigilant and report suspicious activity following a series of thefts of catalytic converters across Hertsmere.

Catalytic converters contain precious metals and are attractive to thieves due to their high metal value. Offences typically occur during the night but some happen in broad daylight. If your catalytic convertor is stolen it renders your car almost undrivable and can be incredibly costly to repair and replace.

Inspector James Lant said “This is a continued focus for us in North Herts and we have been working to tackle this through increased patrols, particularly in hot spot areas. We are also contacting owners of the high-risk vehicles in the areas most affected to offer crime prevention advice.

“We will also be conducting some community engagement events to provide essential advice, as well as working with scrap metal dealers around what to look for when accepting catalytic converters.

“But we would urge people to be vigilant to this crime type. If you see anyone acting suspiciously around a vehicle, particularly where people are trying to get under cars in public car parks or on public roads, please call 999 immediately.

“As part of the Constabulary’s response to this type of crime, Operation Feline aims to help drivers protect their catalytic convertors and to deter thieves. As part of the campaign, a number of garages across the county are offering a free security marking service and I’d urge residents to take up this offer.”

Details of the security marking scheme and further garages taking part in the county, can be found on the Operation Feline page.

In order to minimise the chance of becoming a victim we offer the following advice:

•Lock your car whenever it is left unattended and keep it in a garage when parked at night if possible.

•When using a garage is not possible, park close to fences, walls or a kerb with the exhaust being closest to the fence, wall or kerb to make theft difficult.

•Consider fitting CCTV on your home or driveway, to help deter thieves.

•Use PIR or LED security lighting to make your vehicle more visible and this can also act as a deterrent.

•If your catalytic converter is bolted on, consider having the bolts welded to make removal difficult.

•Fit protective coverings on catalytic converters, such as the Toyota manufactured CATLOC device, (these are made for Toyota Prius made between 2004 and 2009) as these can make it much more difficult for thieves.

•Have your catalytic converter etched or forensically marked, and put stickers in the windscreen to say this has been done.

•Look for car parks with a Secured Car Park sign which have recognised levels of security. If you have a garage at home, ensure you use it and lock it properly.

•Noisy gravel on your drive can help deter a would-be thief, as they don't want to alert you to their approach.

•Never leave valuable items or tools on display in your vehicle as this may encourage a thief to break in.

More advice on how to make your vehicle safe is available on our Crime Prevention page.

If you have information about thefts from vehicles you can also report information online or speak to an operator in our Force Communications Room via our web chat.

Alternatively, you can stay 100% anonymous by contacting the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

**Local Crime Information**

**G4E - Ashwell, Hinxworth, Bygrave, Newnham and Caldecote**

**Burglary Business**, North Road, Baldock – On 17th February three males approached the rear gate and force them open. Once inside they attempted to steal a trailer but were unsuccessful, the males made off the direction they arrived. 41/12004/21 Refers

**Fraud**, Dixies Close, Ashwell – On 5th February Police received a report that a member of public had received a whatsapp and telegram offering financial investment initiatives. The member of public has invested in these schemes which has turned out to be a scam. 41/8798/21 Refers

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

**Nuthampstead**

**Fraud**, Barkway – On 17th February Police received a report that a victim has received multiple calls from a fraudulent Police officer stating that he is investigating her bank. She was asked to with draw money from her bank and to place the money in a ‘safe’ account which was the scammers account. 41/11851/21 Refers

**Theft**, Barley – On 22nd February an oven was left outside a property for waste disposal, at some point during the day the oven was stolen. 41/13126/21 Refers

**Hare coursing related damage**, Barley - Overnight on 27th February a land owner has notice vehicle damage to his crop fields. At the location the land owner found a collection of dead hare’s and foxes. 41/14437/21

**Attempted Theft**, Therfield – At 8:02 pm on 2nd February the victim left his property to take the bins out. As he left the property he heard a noise from his garage and called out. Two males ran away from the garage area towards a vehicle van in the street, one male was carrying a crowbar and was described as being very tall and slim. Nothing was stolen but the garage was damaged in the attempt. 41/8003/21

**Hare coursing related damage**, Barkway -Overnight on the 9th February a land owner has found his land driven over causing damage to crops. The offenders have cut a padlock to an entrance to farm land to access the land and have driven across 900 acres of land. 41/9877/21 Refers

**G3C - Sandon, Wallington, Rushden, Clothall and Weston**

**Theft**, Wallington - On 16th February a farmer reported that some of his sheep were missing. There was a trail of blood, it was suspected the sheep was dragged across land to a vehicle and stolen. 41/11527/21 Refers

Burglary, Clothall Road, Baldock - Overnight on 23rd February and farm along the A507 was targeted. The offender has accessed outbuilding and a caravan stored on site. Tools and other items were stolen. 41/13958/21, 41/13965/21 and 41/14196/21 Refers

**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**