



**POLICE  
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

POILEAS ALBA

North East

# CRIMEALERT

Keeping Communities in the North East Safe

FEBRUARY 2026



## Welcome to the February 2026 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.

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In this edition of North East Crime Alert:

### **Metal Theft in the UK and the Rising Threat to our Renewable Energy Infrastructure.**

The Devastating Impact of Livestock Worring.

### **A Braemar Mountain Rescue Team member, gives an insight into the risks of travelling in the mountains.**

Why Securing Your Car and Motorbike Matters.

### **The Parking Meter Scam Affecting Aberdeen.**

We explain Email Compromise and how to avoid it.

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

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**Website**

[www.scotland.police.uk](http://www.scotland.police.uk)



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*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.*



Retail  
Crime  
TASKFORCE



# Think you're **ANONYMOUS?**

We're sharing information. Connecting the dots.  
**We're catching retail criminals.**


Retailers and police now share intelligence to  
identify repeat offenders and organised groups.

Every piece of evidence is now connected  
through a national intelligence network, linking  
incidents and identifying offenders.



#NotAVictimlessCrime

#RetailCrimeTaskforce

A photograph of several white wind turbines on a grassy hill. The sky is dark and cloudy, suggesting a storm. In the foreground, a cow is visible on the grass.

Rural Crime

# Metal Theft in the UK

The Rising Threat to our Renewable  
Energy Infrastructure

Metal theft has long been a challenge across the UK, but in recent years, the focus of criminals has shifted towards renewable energy infrastructure - particularly wind and solar farms. Copper, a vital component in electrical cabling, has become a prime target due to its high resale value and global demand.

Scotland's commitment to renewable energy is central to our national climate goals, and the theft of copper from wind turbines and solar installations not only causes significant financial losses but also disrupts clean energy production, undermining environmental progress.

## Why Copper Theft is Increasing

### High Market Value

Copper prices have surged in recent years, making it an attractive commodity for thieves. The global shift towards electrification - from electric vehicles to green infrastructure - has increased demand, pushing prices higher.

### Remote Locations

Many wind and solar farms are situated in rural or isolated areas with few nearby houses. This creates opportunities for organised criminal groups to operate with reduced risk of detection.

### Organised Crime Involvement

Intelligence suggests that much of the large-scale copper theft is coordinated by organised networks. These groups have the tools, vehicles, and knowledge to strip large quantities of cable quickly and transport it for illegal resale.

### Economic Pressures

The cost-of-living crisis has also played a role, with some individuals turning to opportunistic theft as a source of income.

## The Impact on Communities and Industry

The consequences of copper theft extend far beyond the immediate financial loss. Damaged infrastructure can take weeks to repair, leading to energy supply interruptions and increased costs for operators - costs that may ultimately be passed on to consumers. In some cases, theft has caused safety hazards, including electrical fires and risks to workers.

For rural communities, the disruption can be particularly severe, as renewable energy projects often provide local jobs and investment.

## What Can Be Done to Prevent It

Police Scotland is working closely with renewable energy companies, local authorities and industry bodies to address this growing threat. Key measures include -

### Enhanced Site Security

Encouraging operators to invest in perimeter fencing, motion-activated lighting, CCTV, and alarm systems linked directly to monitoring centres.

### Forensic Marking

Applying traceable forensic solutions to copper cabling, making stolen metal easier to identify and harder to sell.

### Intelligence Sharing

Strengthening information exchange between police forces, scrap metal dealers, and industry partners to track suspicious activity.

### Legislation Enforcement

Rigorously applying the Scrap Metal Dealers Act, which requires dealers to verify sellers' identities and keep detailed transaction records.

### Community Vigilance

Urging rural residents and workers to report suspicious vehicles or activity near renewable sites.

*Metal theft damages Scotland's economy, threatens our renewable energy ambitions and puts lives at risk. Police Scotland remains committed to proactive patrols, targeted operations and working with industry to protect our critical infrastructure.*



Rural Crime

# The Devastating Impact of Livestock Worrying





Livestock worrying is a serious and traumatic rural crime, particularly during lambing season, when ewes and their newborn lambs are at their most vulnerable. The offence is not just a matter of animal welfare, but also one of public responsibility, rural community trust and legal compliance.

Jacqueline Don is a Veterinary Nurse and works on the family farm in the North East of Scotland.

Jacqueline explains 'Livestock worrying isn't just about the physical harm to the animals – though that alone is devastating – it's about the ripple effect it has on every part of the farming community.

When a dog chases sheep, even if it doesn't bite, the stress can cause ewes to miscarry or lambs to be abandoned. Each loss is not just an animal gone, but months – sometimes years – of work, care and investment wiped out in an instant.

Financially, it's a heavy blow. Replacing stock, paying vet bills – it all adds up. But the emotional toll on farming families is harder to measure. These animals aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet. Seeing them suffer is heartbreaking.

Farmers aren't asking for much – just that people respect the countryside and keep their dogs under control. A lead and a bit of awareness can save lives, protect livelihoods and spare everyone a lot of pain. It's that simple.'

## Understanding Livestock Worrying

Livestock worrying occurs when a dog chases, attacks, or otherwise distresses livestock such as sheep. This can lead to severe consequences: pregnant ewes may miscarry, lambs can be injured or killed and surviving animals may suffer long-term stress that affects their health and productivity. Even if a dog does not physically bite an animal, the act of chasing alone can cause fatal shock or injury.

During lambing season, the stakes are even higher. Ewes are heavily pregnant or caring for newborn lambs and any disturbance can have devastating effects. Farmers work tirelessly to ensure the welfare of their animals and a single incident of livestock worrying can undo months of care and investment as well as being a traumatic and devastating experience.

## The Legal Position in Scotland

The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021 came into force on 5 November 2021 to tackle the issue of out of controls dogs attacking and worrying livestock.

Under this law, the term 'livestock' is wide ranging and includes cattle, sheep, goats, swine (pigs/boars), horses, camelids (alpacas/lamas), ostriches, farmed deer, enclosed game birds or poultry. Under this new law, owners of dogs that attack or worry livestock can be fined up to £40,000 or even sent to prison for up to 12 months.

It's important to note that 'worrying' is not limited to physical attacks. The law covers chasing, barking at, or being loose among livestock in a way that causes distress. This means that even a normally friendly dog, if off-lead and unsupervised, can commit an offence.

## The Impact on Rural Communities

Beyond the immediate harm to animals, livestock worrying damages the relationship between dog owners and rural communities. Farmers rely on public cooperation to protect their livelihoods, and repeated incidents can lead to tension and mistrust. For many in rural Scotland, sheep farming is not just a business but a way of life, and the emotional toll of losing animals to preventable incidents is significant.

## What Dog Owners Should Do

### Prevention is Key

Dog owners can take several simple steps to ensure their pets do not cause harm.

### Keep Dogs on a Lead Near Livestock

Whenever walking in areas where livestock may be present, dogs should be kept on a short lead. This applies even if animals are some distance away or behind fencing.

### Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Always look ahead for signs of livestock, especially in fields, open moorland, or near farm buildings. Remember that sheep can be hidden by terrain until you are very close.

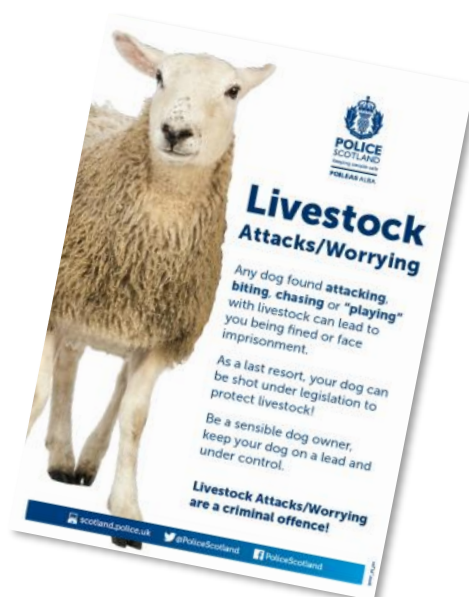
### Respect Signage and Access Guidance

Follow any local notices or requests from farmers, particularly during lambing season.

### Report Incidents Promptly

If your dog does cause harm or distress to livestock, contact the farmer or Police Scotland immediately. Early reporting can help reduce further suffering and demonstrates responsibility.

Livestock worrying is entirely preventable, yet it continues to cause significant harm each year in Scotland. During lambing season, the consequences are especially severe, both for animal welfare and for the livelihoods of farmers. Police Scotland urges all dog owners to act responsibly, keep dogs under control and remember that enjoying the countryside comes with a duty to protect those who live and work there.

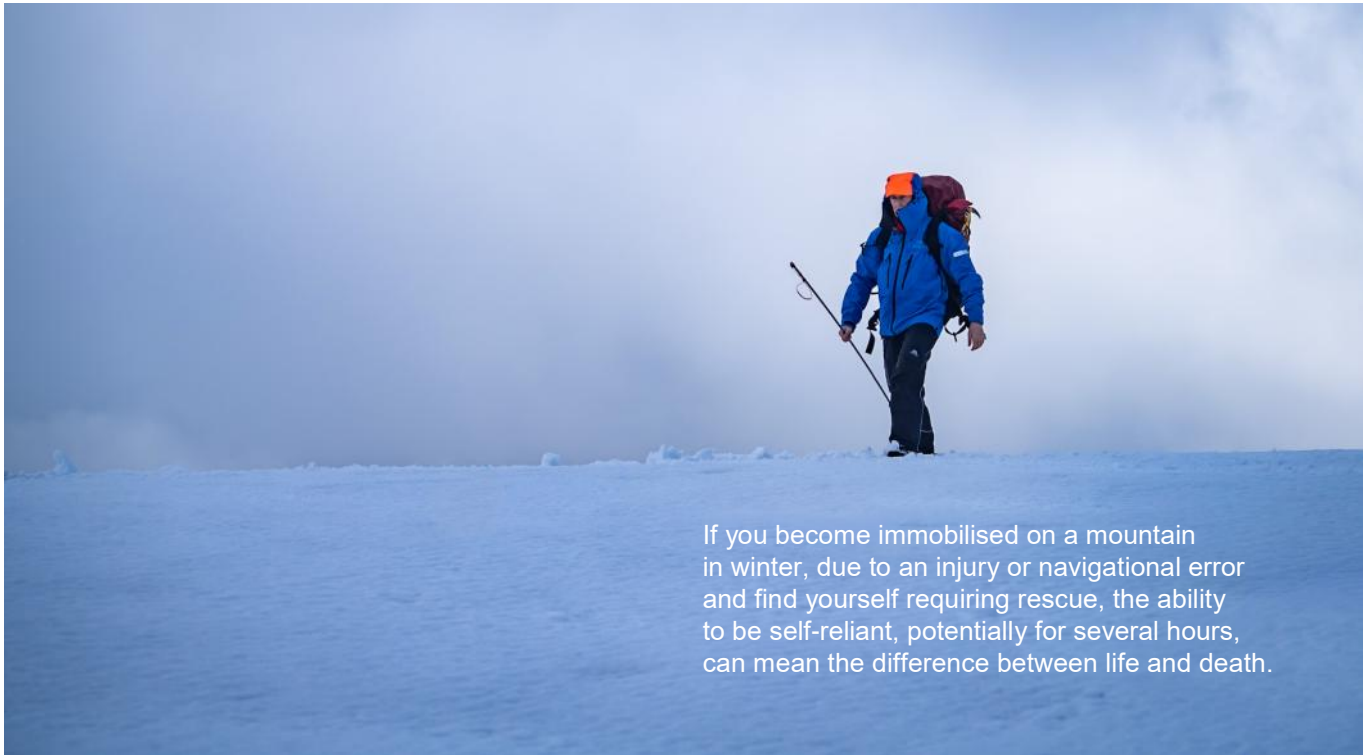




When a day in the hills turns into  
the worst day of your life...

Braemar Mountain Rescue Team member, Bill Dallas,  
gives an insight into the risks of travelling in the mountains  
during winter.





If you become immobilised on a mountain in winter, due to an injury or navigational error and find yourself requiring rescue, the ability to be self-reliant, potentially for several hours, can mean the difference between life and death.

In the Scottish mountains during winter the margin for error can decrease significantly compared to summer. An incident in summer, resulting in a little discomfort can, in winter, become life threatening. Significantly colder temperatures, shorter daylight hours, rain, snow and subsequent wind chill can result in an incident quickly spiralling out of control.

### **Hypothermia - Dying of Cold**

Hypothermia is a major risk in the Scottish mountains due to our cold and wet climate. Relatively benign conditions such as a 20mph wind and air temperature of -2 degrees equates to a wind chill of -9.

Anyone who has stopped on a windy mountain, even just for lunch, will have experienced how quickly the body cools. Imagine a situation where you are forced to stop, whether through injury or being tired, wet and disorientated. It's dark, wet and windy and you are getting colder every minute. Your damp layer of clothing created through perspiration is becoming chilled against your skin and the rain is starting to penetrate your outer layer. You hadn't expected this to happen. Worse still you hadn't prepared for it.

What begun as a walk up a hill on a fresh winter's day is rapidly becoming a life threatening situation. The feeling of panic is starting to increase as the chilling cold is quickly starting to occupy your every thought. Your hands and feet are beginning to feel numb and every gust of wind bites into the exposed skin on your face. Unable to move, all that's left is to huddle and hope that help is on its way.

For Scottish Mountain Rescue Teams this is not an unusual situation. But how do we respond and how can you help us to help you?

### **Calling Mountain Rescue**

Dial 999, ask for the Police and have the following information ready -

The location of the incident (ideally a six figure grid reference and a named feature).

The number of casualties.

What is wrong with the casualties and is their condition deteriorating?

Details of equipment available eg a group shelter.

What is the weather like at your location?

Your contact telephone number and any other mobile numbers in the group.

Once a 999 call has been made a Mountain Rescue Co-ordinator will be alerted. The co-ordinator will try to establish direct communications with the party. A plan will be made dependent on the level of response required. Team members will be mobilised via text to muster at the appropriate base and, if the conditions are good, and assuming it's available, the Coastguard helicopter may also be requested.

Often winter weather conditions will prevent flying which can significantly delay arrival at the scene of an incident.

The Co-ordinator may initially deploy a hasty party; this is a small team, travelling light, carrying the essentials to deal with the situation. Their priority is to reach a casualty as quickly as possible, provide support and stop the situation getting worse.





From the time an incident is reported until the team arrives on scene could be several hours. During this period you should be equipped to prevent your situation deteriorating. Even the best technical clothing will not wick away all moisture from sweating and the most expensive jackets eventually succumb to wet weather. Therefore always carry extra clothing and an emergency bivi bag or group shelter.

On arrival at the base, team members will be briefed. Equipment required for the rescue will be gathered including medical kit, perhaps a stretcher and warm clothes and blankets. The team know the biggest risk to a casualty is hypothermia. The risk increases as the minutes pass. They will also be carrying their own personal winter kit adding to the weight of equipment being transported on foot.

*Back on the hill, the wind speed has increased, snow is whipping across the tops, visibility is zero, you are starting to realise that you will be out here for a while. Properly prepared you will be feeling cold and uncomfortable, but still in control. Unprepared and your anxiety levels continue to rise, you may even start to feel drowsy as the shivering eases. Stopping shivering and being drowsy are clear signs you are drifting into the next stage of hypothermia.*

Weather prevents the hasty party from being lifted by helicopter. They drive as far as they can, but still have an uphill hike of several miles. Their packs are heavy, it's dark and there is deep snow. The wind speed is increasing making the going hard and as they start to climb it gets steadily worse. Visibility is down to a few metres. A sense of urgency pushes them on.





The rest of the team members are now in vehicles and are leaving the base with additional equipment. They move much more slowly on foot than the hasty team and will be in contact with them by radio. The additional kit is heavy and the stretcher cumbersome. This is tough going in any conditions but when it's slippery and dark it can slow progress considerably.

*On the hill, hours of being stationary in the cold is taking its toll. You were lucky: you were able to raise the alarm and you were able to give your position, but it's been 4 hours and there's still no sign of help. You have used all of your reserves and your alert levels are starting to drop. You are colder than you have ever been before.*

If you are still conscious you may see the lights of the hasty party's headtorches heading towards you. Once on scene they will quickly assess the situation; their priority has been to minimise the time between the alert being raised and finding you. This is all based on the information passed by you to the coordinator. The team get to work providing as much shelter as possible, preventing further heat loss and prioritising medical treatment.

Almost 5 hours from raising the alert the rest of the team arrive carrying more medical supplies, stretcher and warm layers, but you aren't safe yet. The more conscious and alert you are the easier it is for the team to treat and safely extract you and your group. A stretcher carry of several miles over rough ground

in the dark is going to take hours. The team has no effective way of warming you, they can only try to prevent further heat loss. Everyone in your party will feel relieved that help has arrived, but the team knows this is still a high-risk situation.

You will be 'packaged,' which depending on injuries, means you are put onto a stretcher in such a way as to prevent further injury and heat loss. Cardiac arrest in an unconscious, cold casualty is a real risk especially when being moved.

Once safely packaged the long carry begins. It is a strenuous task requiring many team members to safely carry out a loaded stretcher. Ultimately you are delivered to an ambulance and qualified paramedics for onward transportation to hospital.

The Scottish weather is fickle at any time of year, but particularly so in winter. Mountain top temperatures rarely get above freezing. Winds can be ferocious. Be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment. Learn the skills necessary to travel safely in the mountains. Learn to navigate using a map and compass and understand the affects of the weather and pay attention to forecasts.

Help us to ensure we can rescue, rather than recover.

[www.scottishmountainrescue.org](http://www.scottishmountainrescue.org)  
[www.sarda-scotland.org](http://www.sarda-scotland.org)



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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](mailto:NorthEastCrimeReduction@scotland.police.uk)

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



# Lock it or Lose it

Why Securing Your Car Every Night Matters





One of the simplest yet effective steps you can take to protect your property is to lock your car every single time you leave it - especially overnight.

While it may seem like common sense, many thefts from vehicles occur because the car was left unlocked or windows were left slightly open. Opportunistic thieves often target quiet residential streets in the early hours, checking for easy access.



### **The Reality of Vehicle Crime**

Theft from vehicles is often a crime of opportunity. Criminals rarely need sophisticated tools - they simply try door handles until they find one that opens. Once inside, they can quickly grab valuables such as handbags, wallets, mobile phones, tools, or even loose change. In some cases, they may also steal documents that could be used for identity fraud.

Police in the North East regularly receive reports of thefts where there was no sign of forced entry, meaning the vehicle was likely left unlocked. These incidents are preventable, and prevention starts with a simple habit: lock your car every time you leave it, no matter how short the time or how safe you feel your area is.

### **Why Night-Time is High Risk**

Night-time offers cover for criminals. Streets are quieter, fewer people are around and darkness makes it harder for offenders to be spotted. Many thieves will walk along rows of parked cars, trying door handles until they find one that opens. If your car is locked, they'll usually move on to an easier target.

### **Practical Steps to Protect Your Vehicle**

Police Scotland recommends the following measures to reduce your risk -

*Always lock your car - even if it's parked on your driveway or in a garage.*

*Close all windows and sunroofs before leaving the vehicle.*

*Remove valuables or store them out of sight. Even an empty bag can tempt a thief.*

*Park in well-lit areas or near CCTV where possible.*

*Consider additional security such as steering wheel locks or alarm systems.*

Vehicle crime can cause disruption to your daily life, financial loss and emotional stress.

*Think of locking your car as part of your nightly routine, just like locking your front door. It's a small action that can save you a great deal of trouble.*

*Remember: if it's not locked, it's not secure.*

**Lock it. Keep it.**

# Parking Meter Scam

Aberdeen residents are being urged to remain vigilant following reports of fake QR codes appearing on parking ticket machines across the city.

Fake QR codes have been placed on legitimate parking meters at several locations across the city during January and February 2026.

The codes redirect drivers to a fraudulent parking payment website. While a small payment is initially taken for parking, victims later discover that much larger sums have been withdrawn from their bank accounts the same day. Double-check the legitimacy of any website before making a payment.

Anyone who believes they may have been affected is advised to contact police by calling 101 or report it via the Police Scotland website.







Securing Your Motorbike Overnight



Leaving your motorbike parked on the street overnight can make it more vulnerable to theft, but with the right precautions, you can significantly reduce the risk. Police Scotland recommends a layered approach to security - combining multiple deterrents to make your bike a far less appealing target.

### **Choose a Safe Location**

Whenever possible, park in a well-lit, busy area covered by CCTV. Thieves prefer dark, quiet spots where they can work unnoticed. If you regularly park in the same place, vary your position slightly to avoid becoming predictable.

### **Lock It Properly**

Always engage your steering lock and use a high-quality, Sold Secure or Thatcham-approved chain or D-lock. Thread the lock through the rear wheel (harder to remove than the front) and secure it to an immovable object such as a ground anchor, lamppost, or sturdy rail. Keep the chain taut and off the ground to make it harder to cut.

### **Double Up**

Consider using more than one type of lock - for example, a disc lock in addition to a chain. Multiple security devices take more time and tools to defeat, increasing the chance a thief will move on.

### **Use a Cover**

A plain, weatherproof cover hides your bike's make and model, making it less tempting to opportunistic thieves. It also adds an extra step for anyone attempting to steal it.

### **Alarm and Tracking Devices**

An alarmed lock or built-in bike alarm can deter thieves by drawing attention. GPS trackers can help recover your bike if it's stolen - some even send alerts to your phone if the bike is moved.

### **Mark and Register Your Bike**

Mark parts with a forensic marking solution and register them with a national database. This makes it harder for thieves to sell stolen parts and helps police identify recovered bikes.

By combining visibility, physical security and technology, you can make your motorbike a far less attractive target and give yourself peace of mind overnight.



# Email Compromise



In the world of modern fraud, the most effective weapon isn't always a complex piece of malware; it can be a well-crafted sentence. If you own or run a business you are at risk.

## What is Business Email Compromise?

BEC is a targeted form of phishing. Unlike generic spam, these attacks are targeted. A criminal impersonates a trusted source - such as a director, manager, a long-term supplier, or a legal advisor - to trick an employee into making a fraudulent bank transfer or sharing sensitive data. Because these emails often come from a compromised (or perfectly spoofed) account, they bypass traditional spam filters and land directly in a trusted inbox.

## How It Happens

Fraudsters don't just guess; they do their homework. They perform 'reconnaissance' on your company using sites like LinkedIn or your own website to understand your hierarchy.

Scammers may use stolen credentials to access a real mailbox. They often sit in the account for weeks, reading threads to learn your tone, invoice schedules and supplier names.

## The Scam

When an invoice is due, they intercede with a message: *'We've changed our banking provider. Please send all future payments to this new account.'*

## Pause, Challenge, Protect

### Implement Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

This is the single most effective technical defence. Even if a criminal steals your password, they cannot access your inbox without that second code.

### Verify via a Second Channel

If you receive a request to change bank details or make an urgent payment, just pick up the phone. Call a known, trusted number for that person - not the one provided in the suspicious email - to confirm the request.

Ensure no single person can authorise a significant payment. A secondary sign-off process is a vital safety net.

### Watch the Digital Footprint

Be mindful of what is posted publicly about staff roles or when directors are away on holiday, as criminals use this out of office status to create a sense of urgency.

### What to do if you are targeted

If you think your business has been compromised or funds have been misdirected, notify your bank or financial institution immediately and notify your bank.

For advice on how to keep your business safe online visit [www.ncsc.gov.uk](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk)

# Crime Alert

A selection of crimes affecting residents from across Grampian

## Copper Theft

Approximately £60-70,000 of copper cable was stolen from an industrial site near Turriff. Two men have subsequently been arrested and charged with a series of thefts in the area.

In a separate incident £1,000 of copper cable was stolen from a utilities company storage container near Fraserburgh.

## Livestock Worrying

A number of sheep received serious injuries following a livestock worrying incident near Stonehaven.

## Wildlife Crime

Enquiries are ongoing following the discovery of a dead Goshawk, believed to have been shot, in the Whiterashes area.

## Theft of Equestrian Carriage

A custom-built horse carriage designed for disabled driving was stolen from stables near Keith.

## Theft of Sheep gates

54 6x4 sheep gates were stolen from a field near Lossiemouth.

## Theft of Fuel

A fuel bowser, containing 1000 litres of fuel was stolen from a field near Lossiemouth.

1000 litres of fuel was also stolen from a building site near Banchory Devenick.

## Cannabis Cultivation

A man has been arrested and charged after a cannabis cultivation was discovered at a property in Buckie. The cannabis had an estimated street value of £430,000.

## Theft

44 Texel cross lambs have been stolen from a farm near Peterhead.

## Marketplace Purchase

An Aberdeen resident saw an i-phone 17 Pro for sale on Marketplace. They met the seller in a public place who insisted on payment in cash. On returning home they found it to be a fake.

## Identity Theft

A North East resident was advised that three credit card accounts had been opened in their name. £5,000 had been spent on the accounts. The credit card companies recovered the money after a lengthy investigation.

## Bike Theft

A £2,500 e-bike was stolen from a poorly secured outhouse in Aberdeen.

## Facebook Investment

An Aberdeen resident lost £40,000 after investing in a fraudulent scheme advertised on Facebook.

## Motorbike Theft

A £2,000 motorbike parked on a side street was stolen in Aberdeen.

## Crypto Scam

An Aberdeen resident clicked on a social media link promising huge returns from Cryptocurrency. The ad was a scam and they lost £65,000.

## Operation Armour

During an operation in Aberdeen 9 adapted e-bikes and an e-scooter were seized and 11 persons charged with riding without insurance and the relevant licences.

## Cannabis Cultivation

A cultivation was discovered at an Aberdeen address with an estimated street value of £187,000. A male was arrested and appeared in court.

## Attempted Quad Theft

Thieves broke into a garage at a farm near Forres and attempted to steal a quad bike. The theft was unsuccessful as the vehicle was secured with a ground anchor and chain.

## Romance Fraud

An elderly Aberdeenshire resident was scammed of almost £200,000 in a complex romance fraud spanning several years.

## Theft from Cars

A male was captured on CCTV entering and attempting to enter a number of motor vehicles in Inverbervie.



# 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](http://www.scotland.police.uk)

## **Twitter**

[www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice](https://www.twitter.com/NorthEPolice)

## **Facebook**

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

## **North East Division Crime Reduction Team**

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