

ALDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL JUNE 2023.

I trust everyone is enjoying the first days of the better weather after a pretty wet and dreary Spring. In fact, the sudden move to better weather, in fact a heat wave, means we have gone from all doors and windows shut tight keeping out the cold to doors and windows wide open allowing the first traces of summer in.

That requires us to just raise the awareness of if we are 'popping out' even for a short time that we secure our properties.

Burglaries in domestic properties are very low across Kent but we just don't want to present a gift to a passing "chancer and opportunist".

Of course, the risks to parked vehicles, garages, sheds, barns, and any form of external storage are always with us.

I reported in previous meetings that parking a vehicle in a rural car park or even at a railway station car park can be a risk if anything is left on show in the car.

Just deploy my 10 second rule. Park, lock the vehicle and just stand for 10 seconds and look in. If you can see anything? so can a criminal!

The rural car parks are a problem when we drive our dogs to different locations to exercise. Even items locked in the boot or glove box can be at risk. Dog walkers often lock items like handbags in the boot to save carrying them round a woodland walk. Criminals know this! They will just smash a window to get inside the car, then sometimes even then leave empty handed. Very sadly crematorium cars parks are notorious as we leave phones in vehicles as we fear an accidental actuation during a service. Criminals know this!

Other areas of concern now are.

1. **Theft of high end make keyless cars.** Mercedes, BMWs and Audis are often targeted.

These crimes are not by chancers and opportunists these are organised criminals who scout out make, model, colour, reg number, house number and location.

They know exactly what and where and when they come to pick up the car and with a key reader laptop device in the early hours of the morning they are in and gone in about 90 seconds.

Ashford District has been hit 5 times in recent days. Safe storage of keys is essential.

2. **Theft of Catalytic Converters from vehicles.** Rural areas have been targeted recently. Why? Because the chances of meeting a patrolling police car are very small and a 999 call "crime in progress" will take travel time to respond.

Criminals work in teams of 3 or 4. A driver plus 2 in the back of the car. One operates a car jack, one slides under on a trolley and a couple of quick cuts and they are gone in seconds. The driver sits with the engine running.

Now you are wondering what the 4th person does well he is the one who stands with a pickaxe handle just to persuade onlookers not to interfere. I should add that's more of a very aggressive crime operation but thought it was worth a mention just in case.

ADVICE /CRIME PREVENTION FOLLOWS



Help prevent the theft of catalytic converters



To reduce this risk:

- mark or etch it with the vehicle identification number or a unique serial number
- secure it to your vehicle with a cat clamp, cage or wire
- park in a garage or busy, well-lit area where possible

If you see something suspicious, **report it**.



Contacting Kent Police

Report a non-urgent crime online www.kent.police.uk/report
Talk to us on LiveChat - available 24/7 www.kent.police.uk/contact
In an emergency, if crime is in progress or life is in danger call **999**
If deaf or speech impaired, text 'police' and your message to **60066**



The Rural Task Force is supporting national action against the theft of catalytic converters.

The crime continues to increase across the country, driven by growing metal prices.

Research has shown thefts have risen during lockdown. The week of action against metal crime from 19-25 April was aimed at targeting offenders and raising awareness.

Illegal waste carriers and scrap metal dealers were among those targeted by Rural Task Force officers across the county.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'This was a national operation led by British Transport Police given the increase in this crime across the country. In the week the Rural Task Force working with our partners stopped 104 vehicles of which 18 were seized for various offences. Four arrests were made, three of which were for a theft offence.

The week included visiting waste metal sites to raise awareness of the issue and to check with their compliance to the legislation and record keeping. Numerous drivers were reported for traffic offences.'

Catalytic converters have been fitted to the exhaust systems of most petrol vehicles built since the early 90s.

According to research, most thefts happen while cars are parked at home, either on the driveway or the road.

Motorists are urged to take extra precautions, parking their vehicle in well-lit residential locations, or ideally a garage, and when away from home, to look for car parks that have security patrols and are covered by CCTV.

Because thieves slide under



the car to get at the catalytic converters, parking against a wall can also help. High clearance vehicles like 4x4s, pick-up trucks and vans are particularly vulnerable to thieves sliding underneath to saw off the converter.

Catalytic converters form part of a car's exhaust system. They contain a honeycomb coated with metals which help filter harmful gases. The RAC said patrols were often called to attend cars that have suddenly become excessively noisy because the catalytic converter has been stolen. Despite being just one

component of a vehicle, their theft can result in costly repairs or a car being written off.

Sergeant Walshaw said: 'Motorists need to be aware of the increase in catalytic converter thefts and we ask them to take steps to protect vehicles. Be vigilant and report anything to us straight away, including anybody seen acting suspiciously around vehicles. We work closely with partners and car park operators and engage with scrap metal dealers to make it easier to trace sellers of stolen metal and identify any dealers who may be operating illegally.

Protect your vehicle

- Fitting perimeter security fencing can help deter opportunist thieves and slow down more organised thieves
- Good security lighting makes vehicles more visible and can act as a deterrent
- Park in a garage whenever possible
- Consider installing good quality CCTV cameras
- Security-mark and register the metal shell of the converter so it can be returned if stolen and recovered
- Where possible park a vehicle against a kerb, with the catalytic converter being closest to the kerb
- If there are a number of vehicles park low clearance vehicles to block the high-clearance ones to obstruct access
- Fit protective coverings on catalytic converters to make it more difficult to steal (car manufacturers can advise on suitable clamps and security cages)
- Have catalytic converters etched or forensically marked and put stickers in the windscreen to say this has been done

3 **Internet shopping parcels taken from doorsteps** where the risk to rural areas has increased as the delivery vans are now followed.

4 Of course, the need to be vigilant with **SCAMS** will always be with us. The important advice is to do absolutely nothing in a rush. Criminals rely on us acting quickly, in a rush without taking a moment just to think.

On your phones, if in doubt just hang up. In a letter form you have time to digest and check. On any other method on computer, tablet and phone never rush into anything.

My guidance, and I know this sounds drastic, if in doubt do absolutely nothing at all.

My final guidance on scams is beware of persons saying they are from the police.



Bogus scammers posing as police officers know that our elderly, who lived most of their lives in far more trusting times than now, will respond positively to anyone saying they are from the police.

Especially criminals posing as officers saying “would you be able to help the police please “

These criminals will seek out our most elderly and vulnerable in the community, please be alert and vigilant.

Have you been asked to withdraw cash by the police?

This is a scam.



The police or your bank will **never**:

- ask for your bank details or PIN
- ask you to transfer or withdraw and handover sums of money
- send a courier to collect your bank cards, cash or PIN

If you are unsure about a call or visitor you have received:

- Don't give out any personal or financial information.
- Hang up or close your front door to check the caller's identity.
- If they phoned you, wait 10 minutes before you use the phone again (or use a different telephone) in case they stay on the line.
- Contact their company yourself or dial 101 for the police – do not call a number they have provided.
- Report suspicious activity straight away.



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If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service **18000**.

Or text us on 999 if you've pre-registered with the emergency SMS service.

www.kent.police.uk   

5 The last warning is again about **rogue traders/bogus callers**.

Once again, the rural areas have been targeted. A ploy is again to find a vulnerable person especially an elderly person living alone.

They turn up uninvited and clean an area of the roof to show what they can do. Firstly, they try to get £25 for doing a few tiles. Then they badger the resident into the roof clean for say £500. They loosen a few roof tiles and splash some bottled water around and panic the resident into thousands of pounds of needless work.



This picture was in Brabourne, Smeeth was also a target.

The next stage can become threatening and intimidating for a lonely person as they demand money.

NEVER EVER AGREE TO UNSOLICITED WORK.

If in doubt don't even open the door. If the persons refuse to withdraw ring 999 immediately. Remember you may be strong enough to resist but further down the road a vulnerable person may not be.

The annual meeting was a credit to you, and I felt it went very well. I was able to strengthen our NHW membership but as important ensure I talked the community through the risks and our work to keep them safe and secure.

It is essential we carry the community with us in all we do working to make Aldington and surrounding areas even stronger and safer in the battle against crime.

The deployment of my OPERATION GUARDIAN ANGEL to help protect our very elderly, disabled and persons with any form of vulnerability has been successful and continues to grow.

Two major issues on my radar and worry list are.

KENT POLICE NEW POLICING MODEL FOR KENT. Launched but not enough staff in place yet.

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL political make up and leadership following elections.

Both these issues are beyond my control but may well impact on my work going forwards.

I hope updates on both issues will emerge in the days around Aldington Parish Council meeting.

You will recall my solid plan I published in January, there may be doubts about how Kent Police will operate in the latter part of 2023. I am very clear and focused.

I hope that clearer details will emerge soon of the police officer who will cover this area as per the old PCSO arrangements.

As of now, PC NATALIE FAIERS is nominated to cover this area. I have worked with Natalie before and look forward to working with her again. I will be able to brief Natalie on the work we are doing together and hopefully bring her to one of the community coffee meetings to introduce her.

I conclude by thanking you all for your support as always. Aldington has a very strong and positive NHW and working together as we do it will grow stronger still helping to keep residents crime free and as important free from the fear of becoming a victim of crime also.

Take care and stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant at all times.

Peter

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