

South Cambridge Police Update on Theft from motor vehicle crime

Written by Alex Dopadlik / Serious Crime Team – CID

In the latter half of 2016 Police investigated a spree of thefts from motor vehicles and attempted thefts from vehicles in the villages in South Cambs. Namely Great and Little Shelford, Harston, Hauxton and Stapleford.

Beginning in April 2016 and sustaining over a period of around 7 weeks, there were 41 recorded offences of either theft from a motor vehicle or attempted theft from a motor vehicle. This spree of offences represented a significant spike in this type of offence in the local area.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of these offences when looked at individually, yielded no lines of enquiry for us as the offences had occurred overnight, there were no witnesses and many victims did not have CCTV. While a specialist scenes of crime officer is normally despatched to this type of offence, no forensic evidence was recovered. However, fortunately one home owner did have CCTV from one of the offences, which gave us a suspect and this person was identified and arrested.

Following the arrest of the suspect and a lengthy investigation process, the male was summonsed to court for the offence of vehicle interference. The man pleaded guilty in November 2016 and was fined significantly.

In times of increasing demand on Policing and on public services in general, it is increasingly important that we aim to prevent offences occurring in the first place. Most vehicle crime is preventable. To quote a common cliché “Prevention is always better than the cure”. It is never possible to guarantee the security of your vehicle against a professional criminal, however a large number of offences are committed by opportunists who take advantage of lax security or take a chance on high value items left on display.

You can take simple steps to reduce your vulnerability to acquisitive crime. A criminal is more likely to target vehicles and homes where there is high value or easy property to steal. The criminal must also have an opportunity to commit the offence.

1. Lock your car! It may seem obvious but a large number of reported thefts involve unlocked vehicles. Make sure that the electronic locking has worked by manually checking the doors.
2. Remove all valuables from the vehicle overnight. Don't leave items on display. Remove sat-nav or phone cradles and try not to leave marks on the windscreen showing that they have been in the vehicle.
3. Don't keep unnecessary documentation in the car, registration documents, insurance certificates etc.
4. Try and park in a garage or public car park if you can, if not, at least in a well-lit area.
5. If your car does not already have one, consider an alarm. Also consider a sticker showing that the vehicle is protected by one.

6. Never leave house keys unattended inside your vehicle. Even if parked away from home, if keys and ID documents are discovered you may find your home could be targeted.

South Cambridgeshire remains one of the safest places to live in the UK and Cambridgeshire Constabulary remains committed to keep Cambridgeshire safe through safeguarding the vulnerable, attacking criminality, preventing crime and reassuring the public.

Visit www.cambs.police.uk for more information on protecting yourself from criminals. Call the 101 non-emergency number to report crime. Call 999 in an emergency when there is crime in progress or risk to personal safety.