

MESSAGE FROM ROTHER DISTRICT COMMANDER

In my last message I mentioned that we were starting to plan where we would focus our resources and efforts during the spring to deal with seasonal crime trends. It's also around this time of year that we take a fresh look at our priorities to ensure that they line up with the issues that are facing Rother district and with residents' concerns. Reducing crime remains our top priority.

Our police station opening times change on Monday 9th May. Bexhill Police Station will now open 10am-2pm and 3pm-6pm Monday to Friday, while Rye and Battle stations will now open 10am-2pm Monday-Friday.

However, we remain as committed as ever to our top priority of reducing crime and delivering an excellent service. Proactive, high visibility policing is one of the ways we will do this, as well as by tackling those types of crime that have the most impact on residents' quality of life. In the year up to 31st March 2011, Criminal Damage made up a quarter of all crimes in Rother - that includes graffiti, damage to homes, cars, churches, and broken windows, etc.

We take these crimes seriously and listen to you when you let us know that they're happening. Just last month, seven 10-18-year-olds were arrested following a spate of criminal damage in the Links Drive area. Neighbourhood Policing Team officers have worked with the area's Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, talked to residents and viewed CCTV footage to identify the offenders. Some of them have admitted to a series of crimes and criminal damage in vulnerable areas has decreased since these arrests.

Some of the people who commit criminal damage can be dealt with via the Community Resolution scheme: one 13-year-old boy is currently washing police cars at Bexhill station for three weekends, under the supervision of his parents, after he was apprehended by a home-owner in Magdalen Road after smashing one of their windows. The victim and police officers decided this punishment as suitable reparation.

One type of crime that makes up a significant proportion of total crime in Rother, particularly in the spring and summer months, is theft from vehicles which, with your help, is a wholly preventable crime. By taking simple steps to protect yourself - such as not leaving valuables in your car - you can help us to reduce crime.

We have also just launched Operation Sunshine again because in the warm weather crimes such as burglary can increase, but can often be prevented. You can avoid becoming a victim by making sure your doors and windows are locked when you go to bed or are out in the back garden, keeping tools locked away in the shed, and using timers to switch on lights when you're out.

That's the part you can play in reducing crime, but for our part we will continue to listen to you and act upon what you tell us. Last month we carried out surveys in Battle, Bexhill and Rye to find out which issues cause you the most concern. More than half the respondents told us that they have no concerns, which is great news. However, some people in Rye told us they were concerned about groups of intimidating youths, police visibility and speeding.

In response we have launched Operation Blitz, which involves extra police patrols on Fridays and Saturdays between 7pm and midnight to increase police visibility, talk to residents and deal with anti-social behaviour. We've also recently conducted speed checks on Udimore Road and in Winchelsea town and will engage with motorcyclists about safe driving and speed awareness during Rye Ride Safe, which starts in May. Op Blitz will also run in Battle and Bexhill in response to concerns raised by residents in those two areas.

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Many of you will have noticed the absence of Sergeant Trish Reeves-Fowkes who recently retired after 22 years' service in Bexhill. Trish will be missed by her colleagues and the community; Sergeant Dan Russell returns to Bexhill as the Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant and Sergeant Paul Masterson joins us in Battle.

Please continue to tell your local Neighbourhood Policing Officers about the issues that matter to you and report any suspicious or worrying incidents as soon as possible, either directly to us or anonymously to Crimestoppers. As well as taking sensible precautions to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of crime, you can get involved in your local Neighbourhood Panel, become a Police Support Volunteer or join Neighbourhood Watch. To find out more about playing your part in keeping Rother safe, visit www.sussex.police.uk.

Kind regards,

Chief Inspector Heather Keating
Rother District Commander

CONGRATULATIONS to Heather Keating who has just been appointed Head of Special Branch for Sussex Police which means she will be leaving Rother shortly.

Heather has been in Rother for four and a half years as an Inspector and Chief Inspector and has been active in promoting community and partnership priorities.