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**Sent:** 15 September 2020 15:37  
**To:** Samantha Wright 42076384 <[Samantha.Wright2@essex.police.uk](mailto:Samantha.Wright2@essex.police.uk)>  
**Subject:** Essex Police Marine Unit 1/4 update

Dear Marine Stakeholders,

I am sure you will agree it has been an interesting year so far, from COVID to the subsequent significant increase in river users throughout the county. The purpose of this email to you all is to give you a brief overview and update on our activities as a Marine Unit for the past 3 months.

We hope most of you will have seen more of our officers out and about either on the shore or out on water throughout the last 3 months. We have been endeavouring to re-focus our efforts towards our community engagement and whilst it is still a work in progress, we have achieved a number of success' so far, which are highlighted below. We have given each area of the county a dedicated officer to focus on the marine issues in your particular area, if you are not aware of them already, they are as follows ;

PC1925 Ian Newling	– River Thames	: <a href="mailto:1925@essex.police.uk">1925@essex.police.uk</a>
PC2609 Dawn Wood	- Rivers Crouch & Roach	: <a href="mailto:2609@essex.police.uk">2609@essex.police.uk</a>
PC1390 Daren Chambers	-Rivers Blackwater & Colne	: <a href="mailto:1390@essex.police.uk">1390@essex.police.uk</a>
PC72598 John Perry	-River Stour/Harwich & Clacton Northwards	

: [72598@essex.police.uk](mailto:72598@essex.police.uk)

We also have a generic email account which all of our officers check when they come on duty, to ensure we deal with as many enquiries as possible as soon as possible ; [marineu@essex.police.uk](mailto:marineu@essex.police.uk). I hope you will make use of these officers and keep them informed of issues in your area. Of course, in an emergency please still use 999 for immediate assistance.

### **Rivers Blackwater & Colne**

- Since the end of Covid lockdown there has been a large increase in anti-social behaviour on the water (mostly, but not exclusively by PWCs). This is happening on all stretches of the Blackwater and Colne, with particular problem areas around launch sites (Point Clear, West Mersea, Wivenhoe approaches, St Lawrence, Heybridge Basin and Maldon). Policing this behaviour is challenging, however a number of prosecutions are in progress in collaboration with local councils. We have identified 11 offenders from photographs and videos sent to us and have dealt positively with the people concerned. New powers have also recently enabled us to issue community penalty warnings and community penalty notices to a number of people exceeding the 8 knot speed limits. We encourage anyone with photographic evidence of water based Anti Social Behaviour to make contact with us. Over this period we have increased our patrols and our visible presence in these hotspot areas with operations most weekends and during the identified busy periods. We are also currently working with the local council on long term solutions to the ongoing problems and liaising with the Maldon river Bailiff on particular areas of concern.

- We are working closely with the owners of private slipways to encourage them to implement vessel registration schemes. This will assist us in identifying the owners of vessels acting in an antisocial manner.
- St Lawrence saw an increase of visitors with PWCs which caused a huge upsurge in complaints about water based Anti Social Behaviour. It also caused parking issues on Main Road and the slipway into the Blackwater and the parking issues prevented emergency services accessing the road. A temporary closure of the slipway has been implemented with a review planned in the winter.
- We have received 1 report of a shellfish picking gang operating near to St Lawrence. Often these gangs are run by organised criminal groups exploiting victims of modern slavery. The collected shellfish make their way in to the food chain without any of the checks necessary to confirm it is safe for human consumption. We would encourage you to report any sightings.

### **River Thames :**

We have carried out two joint operations with Southend Council, Castle Point Council, local Policing teams, GLAA, IFCA, Food standards Agency and Justice and Care charity to deal with illegal shellfish harvesting, modern slavery, food/environmental health and conservation. Future operations are planned and we have a number of persons awaiting prosecution as a result

There has been a sharp increase of reports around Anti-social behaviour with PWC's. We have been paying additional attention to the slipways along the coastline and working with the council to improve safety and review legislation around water craft use on the foreshore. We currently have an agreement with all parties responsible for monitoring these slipways to record every person launching a vessel and this has led to a number of successful prosecutions and further prosecutions are pending.

We are aware of a number Anti Social behaviour reports in Leigh, especially Bell wharf, of beach parties and people climbing over boats on swinging moorings and causing damage. We are working with local Community Policing teams to help increase patrols in the area.

There have been recent reports of immigrants landing at East beach which we have investigated and confirmed with Border Force this usual activity from a visiting yacht and nothing to be concerned about. However, please report any sightings of suspicious activity whether immigration or crime related to Border Force or Police immediately, if necessary via 999 again.

We have noticed from Coastguard reports that there has been a significant increase of people being cut off by the tide especially from visitors to the town and around the mulberry Harbour. Please help to assist the emergency services by ensuring all of your member/client/ colleagues are aware of tides and the dangers.

In the last week and large tender was pulled up onto the top of the slip at Two tree Island and the outboard engine stolen. As autumn/winter approaches please ensure all removable valuables be taken off of vessels and vessels secured. Please check mooring lines as a number of vessels have broken free in recent heavy weather and please be vigilant and check your boat regularly throughout the winter months report any suspicious activity to the Police.

### **Rivers Crouch & Roach**

During the spring and summer season it has become increasing busy since the end of lockdown seeing a huge increase in the number of river users of all types of craft.

There has been a low number of marine related crimes reported, however reports of antisocial behaviour has significantly increased from last year.

From working closely with the Crouch Harbour authority they have estimated that anti social behaviour reports have increased by 60% with some reports stating a high risk of harm to other river users.

The main reports are relating to the use of PWCs on the river, who are breaching the speed limit and use in restricted areas. There have also been a number of reports of smaller ribs and speed boats acting in a similar nature. Through working with Essex Marina we have been able to identify two of these vessels, their details have been reported to the Crouch harbour authority and they have been dealt with positively.

We have been working with yacht clubs and other Crouch user groups to spread awareness about reporting procedures and speaking with local marine stores, one store reported selling the same amount of paddle boards in one weekend than they did in the whole of last year. Although initially this is not a police issue, it does mean that there are a lot more people on the water with little or no maritime experience increasing rescue calls via coastguard. However, on the plus side there are a lot more eyes on the water who could help with marine related crime. We have been liaising with local paddle board clubs to identify ways we can work together to keep the Essex coastline safe.

### **North Essex/Harwich & River Stour**

There have been a number of thefts and issues of Trespass around the Wrabness area, we are currently working with local land and waterside premises owners to help reduce this problem. In conjunction with our land based community teams we have identified some of the offenders and been able to positively deal with them.

Following recent reports of a suspicious male around vessels within the boat park at (Stour) sailing club we have identified the male concerned, who suffers from mental health issues and confirmed there is no cause for concern, however, please continue to inform us of any unusual or suspicious behaviour in your area

Following reports of a rib and outboard stolen its swinging mooring on the Stour our officers were able to attend and recover the stolen items within three hours of the report and return the items to a delighted. This has led to a number of significant leads regarding criminal activity in the areas which we are currently following up. We have also had reports of a stolen PWC in the Harwich area which are attempting to locate as this report is being written.

There have been recent reports of Shellfish pickers operating on the Harwich coastline, we are working with our local community policing teams and the council to target these activities in a similar approach to our successful operations in the Southend area.

We are working closely with our Border Force Colleagues in the area regarding a number of issues. This is to ensure we have a seamless approach to emerging problems and all bodies are working as efficiently as possible. In the event of an emergency please do not hesitate to use 999, however, if you are in any doubt on who to contact for ongoing issues please feel free to contact us and we will endeavour to assist or point you in the right direction.

We are working hard to protect the Essex Marine Community and are closely monitoring the increase in Anti social behaviour. We would encourage anyone to report any further issues to us as and when these occur. We also have a number of plans for the forthcoming year, these include ;

- (i) A Public Space Protection Order for the river Colne, Brightlingsea and around Mersea.
- (ii) A Water Awareness Scheme, (which will operate very similar to a driver improvement scheme) as an alternative to prosecution and an educational tool for water safety.
- (iii) A fully refurbished Rigid Hull Inflatable boat for fast patrol
- (iv) Continuing joint patrols in Hotspot areas and Antic Social Behaviour.
- (v) A new community engagement strategy to encompass all marine stakeholders in the marine community (including PWC users) to improve awareness of marine safety, rules & regulations and keep stakeholders up to date with current and past Police efforts & initiatives.
- (vi) An extension of our PWC registration system which we currently operate on the river Thames to great effect.
- (vii) Further liaison with local Councils and local Community Policing Teams as well as key stakeholders on the river.
- (viii) A joint agreement with Border Force to share vessels to give us access to an increased fleet of vessels .

We hope you will have found this update to be of use, it is our intention to repeat these on a 3 monthly basis. Please be assured we will work hard to provide the best possible service to you as our stakeholders and would welcome any feedback you may have.

Best Regards

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