

Bogus police officers target tourists in Edinburgh



Police are appealing for assistance from the public in order to trace a group of thieves who are continuing to target tourists in the capital.

In the past three weeks alone, there have been in excess of ten reports of thefts committed by people impersonating police officers. On each occasion the suspects have claimed to be police officers in order to search visitors' bags.

The latest such incident came on Wednesday 21st May, when a mother and daughter on holiday in Edinburgh from Chile had over £1,000 stolen from a bag.

The pair were firstly approached by a man on Magdala Crescent who handed them a camera and asked them to take a photograph of him. Another two men soon approached stating they were plain-clothes police officers, produced a photo card with the word 'police' on it and then demanded to check identities.

They initially searched the bag of the man with the camera, who immediately complied, and then looked through a bag belonging to the Chilean tourists, managing to steal a large sum of dollars and sterling in the process.

Extensive enquiries are ongoing into all the incidents and Detective Chief Inspector Stuart Houston said: "There is clearly a group of thieves operating in Edinburgh who are falsely presenting themselves as police officers in order to search the bags of unsuspecting tourists.

DCI Houston added: "These crimes are being carried out in streets across the city centre. And unfortunately the so-

called 'officers ' act so quickly that the victims are being duped into thinking the cash is still in their wallets or bags.

"We would urge members of the public to look out for men who are acting suspiciously, especially around tourists, and contact police immediately the minute they see something untoward."

There are three suspects linked to many of the crimes that have taken place this month.

The first is an Asian male in his late 30s or early 40s, 5ft 10in and of medium build; another is an Asian male in his mid-40s, 5ft 7in and of slim build; and the other is of Mediterranean appearance, 30 to 35-years-old, 6ft 2in and of medium build. The men claiming to be police officers generally wear dark clothing and often have earpieces visible.

Anyone who thinks they have any information which could help in the investigation should contact Police Scotland on 101 or, alternatively, the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.