

I’m worried about theft

There’s no such thing as absolute bike security. Given time and access, any system can be broken. You are therefore aiming to make it sufficiently difficult for a potential thief that they decide to move on.

Analysis of recent bike thefts on Hayling Island reveals that:

- Hayling Island is second only to Leigh Park in the local area for bike thefts
- The large majority of thefts were of unsecured bikes visible to passers-by
- Using a grotty bike is little protection – thieves seem to go for any kind

It would be nice to think that Hayling is a relatively safe place to leave a bike, but that’s unfortunately not so. Having said that, we do have plenty of places to secure a bike and it seems that any lock – even weak ones – can be a deterrent to an opportunistic thief.

The follow sections discuss various aspects of bike security...

▼Bike locks

There’s no such thing as a good, cheap lock or a good, light lock. Good locks come at a price and are heavy. Unfortunately, just because a lock is heavy and expensive does not mean it is a good one.

Instead look for a ‘Sold Secure’ rating. This is an independent assessment of how long it should take a thief to overcome the lock. Ratings are Gold, Silver and Bronze.

When you secure a bike with a lock, try to secure the frame of your bike to something fixed – such as a bike stand or a lamp post. You might be tempted to secure your bike by a wheel, but that’s unlikely to be effective – most bikes have a wheel release mechanism that makes it easy to detach the wheel and take the rest of the bike.

Tip: if your lock comes with a key, keep it locked so you have to unlock it to use it. That way you won’t lock up your bike only to find you’ve left the key at home!

There are five basic kinds of bike lock:

1. **‘Coffee shop’** locks – these are small, light locks with thin cables. They are designed to deter an opportunistic thief. A sharp tug is, however, all it takes to break this kind of lock. Avoid this type of lock if you leave your bike unattended for any length of time.
2. **Combination** locks – have the advantage that you can’t lose the key. Unfortunately, all but the best combination locks are easily undone. Avoid if there is any play between the ends of the lock. Instead – if you want to use this type of lock, look for a good name with a good ‘Sold Secure’ rating.
3. **Padlocks** - are a good compromise between security and weight/bulk. They consist of a chain and a padlock or a lock fixed to a cable at one end and that locks the other end. It’s easy to thread cables and chains through railings, around lamp posts and other fixings.
4. **D-locks** or **U-locks** – they’re the same thing. They are – in effect – very large padlocks made entirely out of solid metal. You can also get cables that attach to this type of lock so you can secure your wheels to the frame. These are the most secure types of lock but they are heavy and can be difficult to secure to fixings. Commuters often leave their locks at work (or locked to a fixing) so they don’t have to carry them on the bike.
5. **Alarmed locks** – all types of lock can be used with an alarm that goes off if someone tampers with the lock. These are not very practical when out and about, but can be a useful extra protection at home or at work.

▼Replacement skewers

Skewers are used to secure your bike’s wheels to the frame. Most modern bikes come with ‘quick release’ skewers that allow you to remove your wheels quickly, without tools. A lockable skewer uses a special kind of nut that can be undone only with a suitable key (like lockable car wheel nuts). They can be very inconvenient if you suffer a puncture, though.

▼Location

While out and about, you might be tempted to try to hide your bike away so it’s not easily spotted by a thief. Unfortunately, that makes it easier for the thief since they can be reasonably sure they can work on your bike without interruption. It’s safer to use a public place where lots of other bikes are secured:

1. There’s safety in numbers. If you’ve gone to the trouble and expense to lock your bike securely, there’s almost certain to be an easier target for the thief.
2. If there are people around, a thief will be worried you are returning to your bike.
3. If the parking place is overlooked by shops, bars and restaurants, a thief will be worried you might be watching your bike.

Space can be a problem when storing your bike at home. To save space, you can buy bike hooks that allow you to store bikes vertically or even hang them as decoration! You might have several choices of location:

- In your house or flat – probably the most secure location if you have room. You’ll need to protect carpets and floors from oil and water drips.
- A garage – you can combine both bike and car security.
- A garden shed – usually not as good as a garage because doors can be wrenched open or fixings unscrewed.
- An open area – but you will be reliant solely on on your bike security.
- An open area visible from the street – but you will be offering an invitation to a bike thief.

▼Wall/floor anchors

When storing your bike at home, you’ll need something to secure your bike to. If you have nothing suitable, you can buy an anchor that is fixed to a wall or concrete floor. Your lock passes through the anchor to secure your bike.

Make sure you follow the manufacturer's fixing instructions. In particular, you need to be sure the thief cannot simply unscrew the fastening bolts to remove the anchor.

▼Record details about your bike

That does nothing to prevent your bike from being stolen, but might help you recover it. Make a note of the frame number (usually stamped into the metal below the pedals) and log anything that makes it unique (take a photo of chips and scratches).

▼Check your insurance

You might find your bike is already covered by your household contents cover. More likely, however, you will need to tell your insurance company about it, and there might be an additional charge. Compare costs with specialised bike insurance policies; they will probably be more expensive but offer additional benefits such as transport to home in the event of a serious problem.

▼Postcode your bike

This is a free service offered by the Hayling Island Police's [Safer Neighbourhood Team](#). A discrete band is attached to your bike recording your postcode. That makes it more difficult for a thief to dispose of your bike,

Look out for SNT attendance at local events or get in touch and arrange a time and place to get your bike postcoded.

▼Use bike security web sites

These sites allow you to record details of your bike so that:

- If your bike is found, Police can find out who owns it, and return it to you
- Potential buyers of your bike can use the sites to check the credentials of the seller and find out if the bike has been stolen from you
- If you want to sell your bike, a registration more than a few months old provides some evidence you are the rightful owner
- You prevent a thief registering your bike to claim ownership

Police forces usually rely on a single site. Hampshire partners with [Immobilise.com](#). The other main site is [BikeRegister](#). Both sites offer a range of services:

- A free registration service that allows you to record details about your bike so that others can check its status and, if necessary, get in touch. The sites would obviously prefer you to pay for a service, so you will need to be persistent to get to the free service.
- A sticker that can't easily be removed that advertises your registration to thieves and potential buyers.
- 'Smart water' encoding that covers your bike and components in tiny dots that link your bike to its registration on the web site.

We suggest you register with both sites. If you decide to use one of the paid for services, however, it's not worth buying the same service from both sites.

▼Take care when online

If you are not careful, you can provide a thief with clues of where to find an expensive bike. In particular, if you participate in a cycling social networking site like [strava.com](#), make sure you do not record routes that accurately describe your home location.

This entry was posted in [Help with cycling](#) by [Andy Henderson](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

2 THOUGHTS ON "I'M WORRIED ABOUT THEFT"



David Noakes on [May 3, 2014 at 14:47](#) said:
Can you tell me when and where the next Post Coding for bikes will take place?



Andy Henderson
on [May 4, 2014 at 13:22](#) said:

As far as I know, there are no routine postcoding sessions. The 999 emergency services day is on Sunday 22nd June this year and the Safer Neighbourhood Team normally do bike marking there. To get it done earlier, I suggest calling the SNT on 101 or email hayling.island.snt@hampshire.pnn.police.uk. They'll be able to help you get it done. I arranged to get my bike postcoded at the police station in South Road.

Andy

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