

1. Sir Teddy Taylor

We were sad to hear of the death of Sir Teddy Taylor. The country has lost a great man and a wonderful MP, who worked for all his constituents, no matter what their political persuasion.

2. Nuisance caller at houses

Yet more stories are coming in about a man who knocks on front doors very late at night (11pm) asking for money. One BERA member told him the police had been called and he should leave their property immediately. This seems to have worked and the caller fled. Please report these nuisance callers to the police. They may not have the manpower to come out to your property but they should know the scale of the problem and how much it is upsetting residents. We do have panic and personal alarms available (free of charge to BERA members) if you would like them.

3. New cycle parking scheme

A new cycle parking scheme for local businesses has been launched in South Essex to provide employers with free cycle parking stands.

The scheme is part of the Ideas in Motion South Essex Active Travel initiative led by Essex County Council in partnership with Southend-on-Sea Council and Thurrock Council following an award of £3.33million from the Department for Transport's Access Fund.

The aim is to make it easier for people to access education, jobs and skills using healthy, physically active forms of travel such as walking and cycling. Additional benefits of the project include improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions, and alleviating traffic congestion.

Businesses, community groups and pretty much any employer with staff, visitors or customers who arrive by bike, are eligible to apply. To be eligible the organisation must be based in Southend, Thurrock, Castle Point, Rochford or Basildon and organisations can apply to have up to four cycle stands free of charge. Successful applicants are then responsible for installing the cycle parking on their premises in a location agreed with ParkThatBike.

As well as the classic Sheffield-type cycle stand, heart-shaped stands, wall-mounted rails, Plant Locks (a combined planter and bike rack) and free-standing "toast-racks" are also available.

The cycle parking scheme is managed by ParkThatBike, a social enterprise.

To apply for free cycle parking visit www.ParkThatBike.info or phone 01594 564 344 and ask for an application form.

Consumer Corner

3. Waitrose and John Lewis match pricing

A member wanted to purchase a MacBook and had researched where it was cheapest to buy it. They went into Waitrose and asked them to price match and were advised that Waitrose only price match their electrical items with John Lewis, due to the fact that they offer a 3-year extended warranty. On visiting a local electrical store they found the MacBook £200 cheaper. It pays to shop around.

4. Swimming lessons at Garons Sports Complex

Another member has advised us that the Council have allowed Fusion, who manage Garons Sports Complex, to increase swimming lesson costs by 40%, to £28 per month per child. With many of our residents facing economic hardship this does seem to be a mean move by the Council who should maybe absorb the costs for this financial year, to allow local residents the opportunity to manage their finances.

Please let us know if you have any consumer related stories that will be of interest to BERA members and we will add them to the newsletter.