How to Stop Windows 10 Hiding Files and Folders
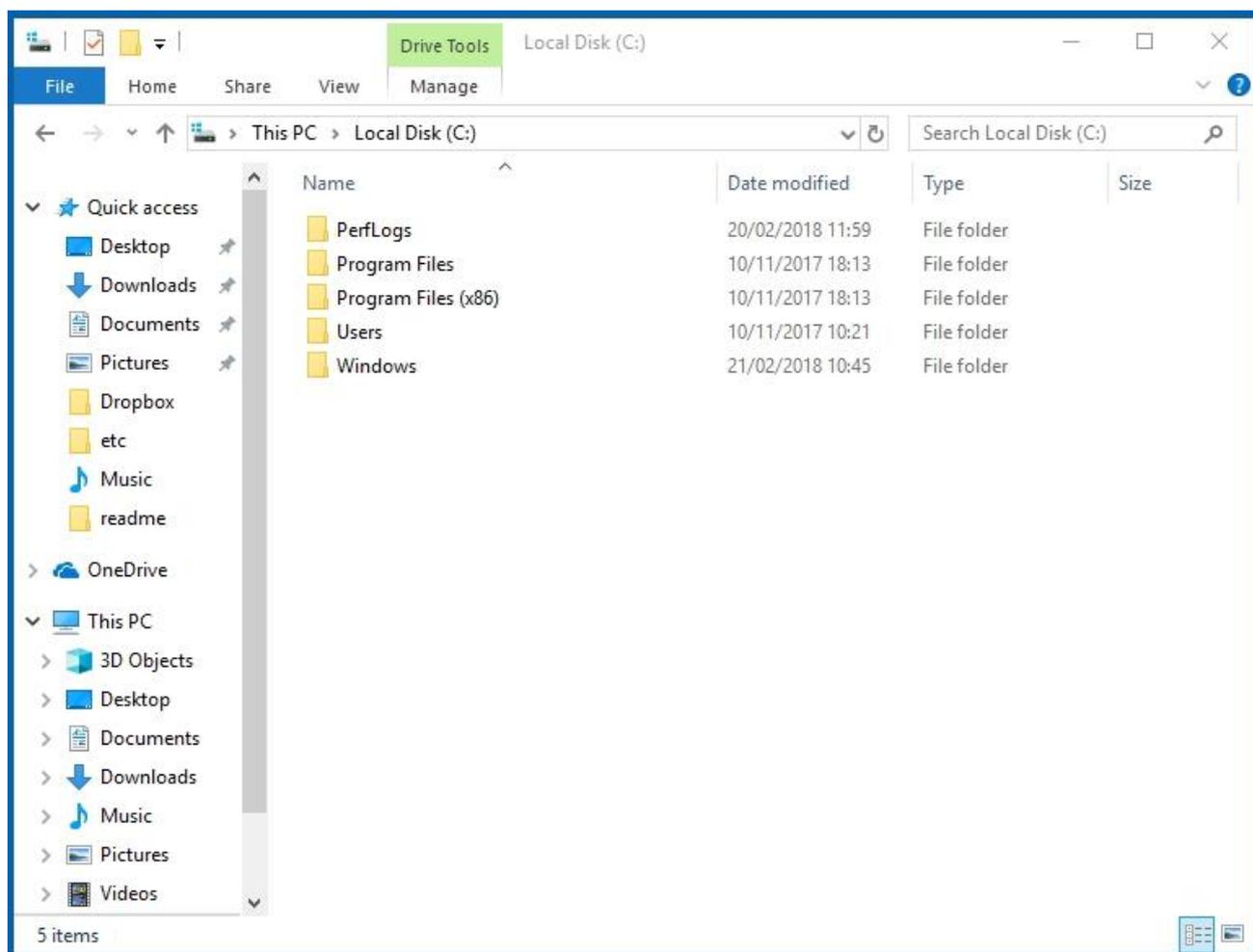
This "How To" guide is included to give you a better chance of locating the files on your PC that contain email data which you'll need when migrating to our hosted Exchange server.

By default, Windows hides some files and folders that Microsoft considers to be part of the Windows Operating System.
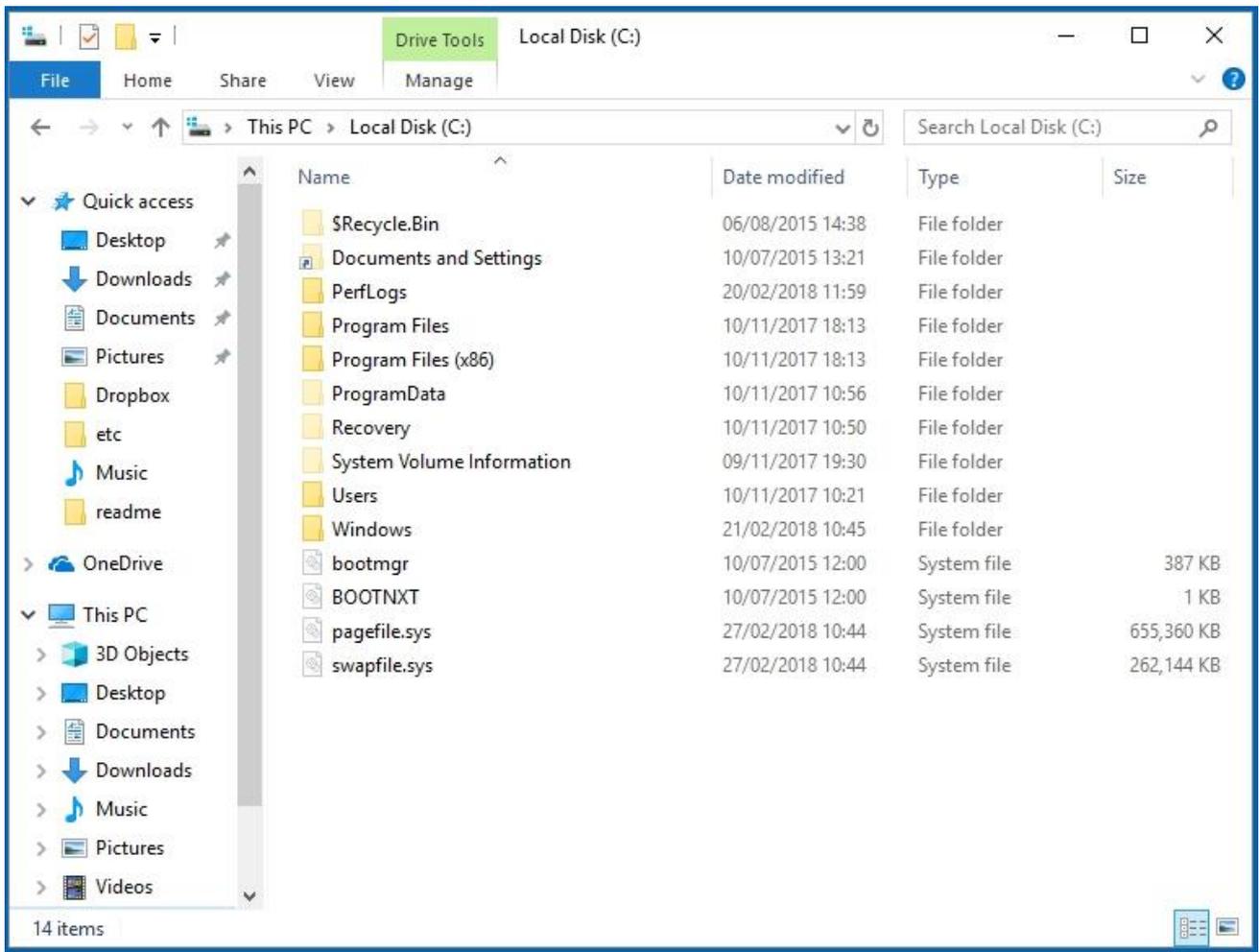The idea is to save users from self-harm by discouraging them from entering these proscribed areas and going on a rampage of deleting files.

However, if you have to do any form of maintenance or problem solving on your PC, you'll soon find yourself straying into these areas and you'll quickly become frustrated if File Explorer windows are only showing you a filtered version of what's actually there.

As an example, this is the *sanitised* view of a typical C: drive:-
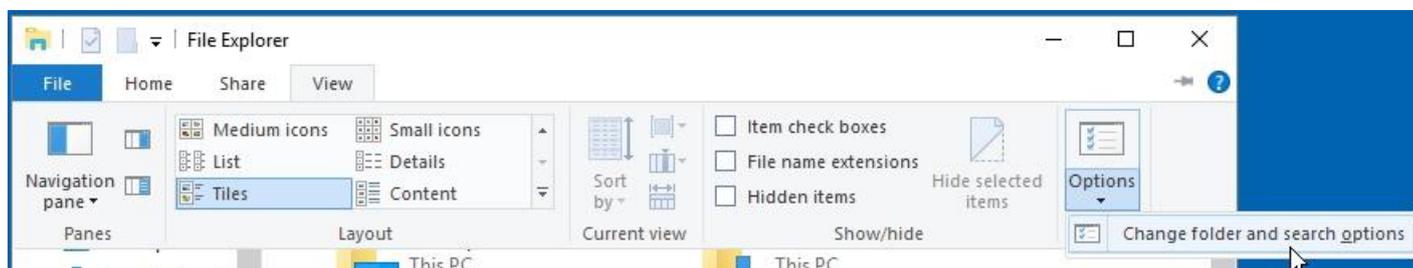
This is what's *really* there:-

File Explorer is the best tool for working with files and in Windows 10, the icon to run File Explorer is in a prominent position, pinned to the Task bar next to the Start button (shown ringed in red):-

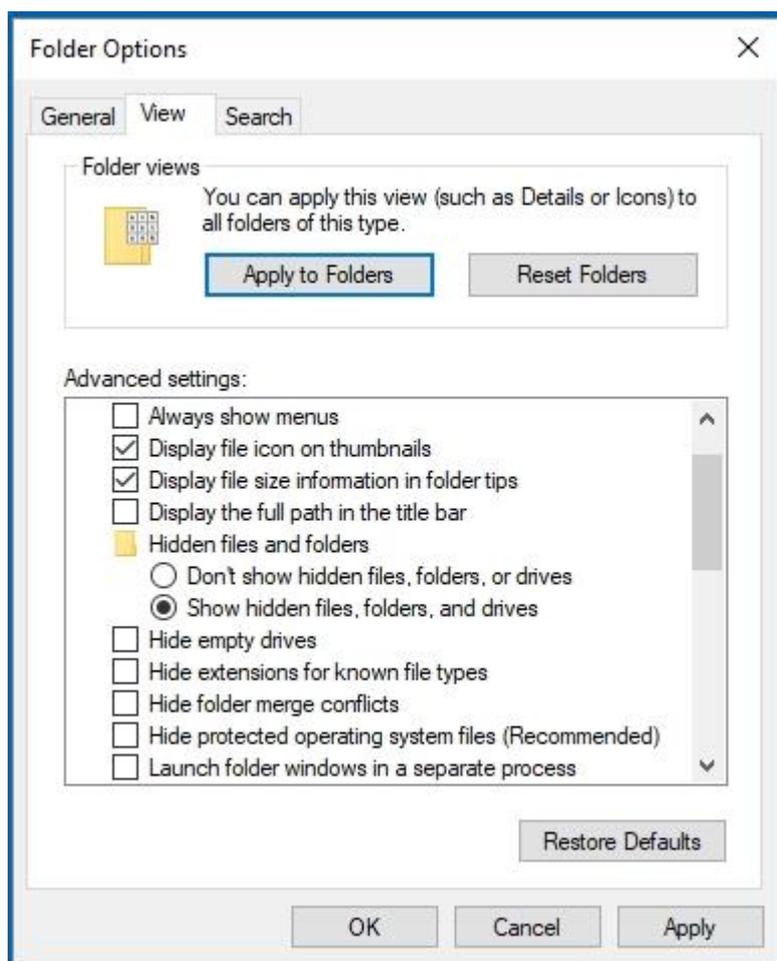# 1 – How to make Windows Display all Files and Folders

Run File Explorer and click on the **View** tab then **Options - Change folder and search options**

Change the settings below to those shown opposite:

These are the 5 things you need to change:-

The last one will trigger an "Are you sure?"

It will also make a couple of ghostly files appear on the Desktop:

Just ignore them. If you delete them they'll come back.
If they annoy you too much then go back and re–select:-
Hide protected operating system files (Recommended)

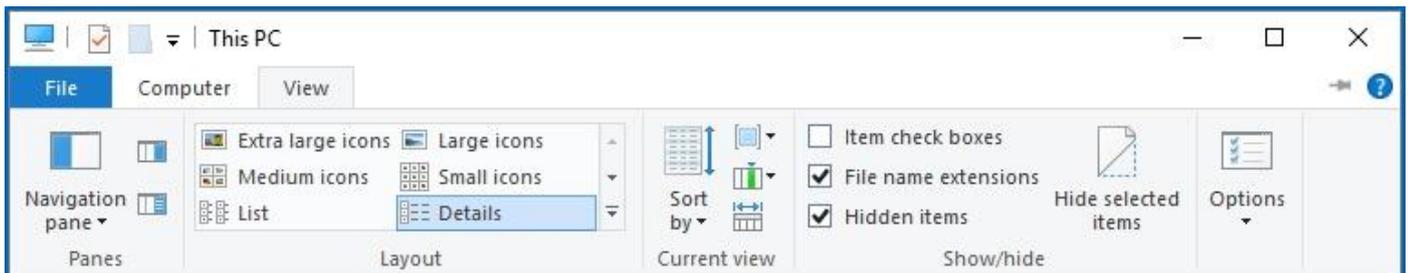Click: **OK** and the new settings will take effect immediately.

2 – How to Change the way Files are displayed in File Explorer

There are 8 options for how File Explorer displays files:-

Extra Large Icons, Large Icons, Medium Icons, Small Icons, List, Details, Tiles and Content

Most of these different views can be useful in certain circumstances, but by far the most useful one is Details.

To switch views, click on the **View** tab on File Explorer top bar and pick the view you want in the Layout section:-

(You need to scroll down to see Tiles and Content.)

The Details view is usually the one you want because it shows the most information in the smallest space and, by clicking on the column headings, you can sort the files in date order, alphabetically, by size or by type.

If you're convinced then you might say:-

 "Wouldn't it be a good idea if Details was the default view for *all* file windows".

To make this happen, go back and follow Section 1 again, making sure that when you display the contents of the C: drive you switch to your desired default view, then in the **Folder Options** windows – **View** tab, click the button labelled: **Apply to Folders**.