



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

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**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
22 MAY 2026**

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE RURAL AND WILDLIFE POLICING TEAM

SUMMARY:

1. Covering the 2025 calendar year, this report provides an update on the performance of the Rural and Wildlife Policing Team, aligned to the four key areas identified by the Rural and Wildlife Policing Strategy 2023 - 2025; Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report covers the 2025 calendar year and provides an update against the four priority areas set out within the Rural and Wildlife Policing Strategy 2023–2025.
- 1.2 It evidences the continued commitment of the Rural and Wildlife Policing Team (RAWPT) protecting victims, maximising investigative opportunities and securing appropriate outcomes. Delivery is underpinned by a focus on problem solving, partnership working and targeted activity in areas of greatest harm to strengthen public trust and confidence.
- 1.3 This approach aligns with the Force Strategic Plan 2023–2028 and supports a consistent, intelligence-led and community-focused model of policing.

2. GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- 2.1 Strategic oversight for rural and wildlife policing sits within the County Partnerships and Prevention Hub (CPPH), with tactical delivery led by a designated Inspector.
- 2.2 Priorities are set in line with Constabulary strategic objectives and routinely reviewed through the Neighbourhood Policing Board (NHP), ensuring alignment, oversight and coordinated tasking across neighbourhood policing.
- 2.3 Suffolk Constabulary aligns its Rural and Wildlife Policing Strategy with the NPCC Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2025–2028. This adopts a dual approach:
 - Rural crime: primarily organised acquisitive criminality.
 - Wildlife crime: including offences linked to hunting and rural assets.

3. RURAL POLICING STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 RAWPT comprises a dedicated Sergeant and three Police Constables.
- 3.2 A specialist function, the Team:
 - Coordinates intelligence-led activity and supports an adaptive response to rural crime trends.
 - Builds capability across County Policing Command through training, advice and operational support.
 - Works with partners and communities to develop intelligence, address concerns and support victims.
 - Applies problem-solving and harm-based approaches to persistent and high-impact issues.
 - Provides tactical advice and investigative support, including cross-border coordination.
- 3.3 Delivery is structured around the national Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue framework.

Oversight, Performance and Partnership

- 3.4 Performance is monitored through a combination of operational activity, force performance measures and public confidence indicators, supported by the tactical delivery plan.
- 3.5 Partnership engagement remains central, with ongoing collaboration with organisations such as National Farmers Union (NFU) and County land association (CLA) to inform priorities and assess impact.
- 3.6 Work is underway to strengthen analytical capability through development of a Power BI product, enabling improved tracking of rural and wildlife crime, hotspot identification, repeat offending and trend analysis. This will support both operational tasking and strategic oversight.
- 3.7 At a national level, further work to define “rural” and “rural crime” to enhance consistency. Locally, this will support clearer categorisation across:
- Rural acquisitive crime.
 - Wildlife crime.
 - Heritage crime.
 - Infrastructure crime.
 - Environmental crime.
- 3.8 Whilst national definitions of “rural” and “rural crime” continue to be developed, the following offence types provide a useful indicator of demand for RAWPT activity:

	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Apr 25 – Mar 26	Change # (%)
Church Crime	60	45	-15 (25%)
Hare Coursing	60 Wet year so lower than normal	76	+16 (26.7%)
Livestock offences	16	12	-4 (25%)
1st - 14th April 2026 – Only			
Oil tank thefts	37		

- 3.9 Variations in offence patterns are influenced by external factors, most notably weather conditions, which have a direct impact on hare coursing activity. The 2024/25 period saw reduced offending due to poor conditions, while improved weather in 2025/26 has corresponded with increased reporting.

DELIVERY

PREPARE

3.10 During the reporting period, RAWPT has delivered a broad programme of engagement, prevention and disruption activity, including:

- Ongoing media engagement (press, radio and TV), including quarterly features in the *East Anglian Daily Times*.
- Promotion of digital engagement platforms such as *Suffolk Connected*.
- Deployment of a new exhibition trailer at major rural events, increasing visibility, engagement, and generating external income.

Partnership and Operational Activity:

- Joint work with the Environment Agency to address poaching and out-of-season fishing.
- Targeted operations to disrupt offences such as night hawking.
- Collaborative activity with partners including NAVCIS and the NFU to reduce theft (e.g. agricultural GPS units).

Targeted prevention and community initiatives:

- Presence at major rural and countryside events to deliver prevention messaging.
- Expansion of the Volunteers on Horseback scheme, now one of the largest nationally.
- Awareness activity in response to increases in livestock worrying.

Campaign and Enforcement Activity:

- Delivery of national operations including Op Recall (livestock attacks, Op Galileo (hare coursing), Op Lakeshot (catapult offences) and Op Owl (wildlife persecution).
- Heritage Crime Week of Action, supported by coordinated partner activity and daily communications output.

3.11 RAWPT continues to demonstrate strong engagement internally and externally, with officers recognised for high levels of community interaction and effective promotion of key channels.

PREVENT

3.12 RAWPT has maintained a strong preventative focus through training, engagement and partnership activity, strengthening both internal capability and community resilience. This includes specialist training for Contact and Control Room (CCR) staff, Community Policing Teams (CPTs) and Response officers, alongside updated response plans and targeted campaigns addressing key rural crime types. Prevention messaging has been amplified through multi-channel engagement, including media and direct community contact, with campaigns such as Close Pass achieving over 28,000 views and positive feedback. Practical interventions, including distribution of target hardening materials to over 60 agricultural retailers and new prevention tools (e.g. horse tack marking kits), have further supported early intervention and awareness across rural communities.

- 3.13 Operational delivery is supported by effective partnership working and intelligence-informed activity, including collaboration with landowners, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Local Authorities and regional policing partners. Key initiatives such as Operation Recall (livestock worrying) and Operation Walrus (GPS theft prevention) demonstrate proactive problem-solving, supported by improved data capture (e.g. farmer database for early warning alerts). Regional coordination through RCAG ensures consistency and shared learning, while Problem Activity Logs (PALs) are actively used to manage ongoing risks such as hunt activity and illegal off-road use.
- 3.14 Sustained prevention activity has contributed to reductions in specific crime types, including church crime by target hardening, improved use of CCTV and partnership working with scrap metal dealers. Livestock-related offences remain subject to ongoing monitoring, with further detail provided in subsequent sections.

PROTECT

- 3.15 RAWPT adopts a community-led, harm-focused approach, ensuring rural communities are listened to, represented, and actively supported to improve personal, property, and business safety. This is delivered through strong multi-agency intelligence sharing and partnership working, with regular engagement at regional forums to identify emerging threats, cross-border criminality, and set local priorities based on highest harm.
- 3.16 The Team provides specialist leadership in areas such as heritage crime and protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), working closely with partners including Historic England, the National Trust, Forestry Commission, RSPB, and local authorities to ensure consistent prevention, recording, and investigation standards.
- 3.17 Operationally, activity is aligned to target organised and high-harm offending, including collaboration with the National Rural Crime Unit and the National Construction and Agricultural Theft Team to identify Organised Crime Group activity and cross-border crime patterns. Intelligence and engagement are further strengthened through links with non-statutory groups (e.g. Suffolk Action for Wildlife), improving community confidence and information flow. The Team maintains national influence through representation at the UK Wildlife Crime Tasking and Co-ordination Group meetings, while delivering practical disruption through joint patrols with the Environment Agency to tackle issues such as fish poaching. This coordinated model ensures resources are prioritised effectively, with a clear focus on preventing the most harmful rural crime impacting communities.

PURSUE

- 3.18 Enforcement activity is aligned to highest threat, risk and harm, with RAWPT providing specialist capability, guidance and investigative support to local policing teams. This includes access to technical expertise, equipment and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) engagement to strengthen evidence-led outcomes. A notable example is the large-scale livestock attack at Assington Green, where a detailed investigation, including enhanced animal DNA analysis, resulted in a guilty plea at Crown Court and the destruction of the dogs involved, alongside significant media interest. Wider activity demonstrates effective problem-solving and partnership action, including tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB) hotspots such as Dedham riverbanks and Landguard Fort Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), where joint working has delivered disruption, safeguarding and environmental protection.

3.19 The Team continues to deliver tangible enforcement outcomes across a range of rural crime types, combining disruption, prosecution and preventative powers. This includes action against off-road motorcycle ASB (Community Protection Notice [CPN] warnings issued with no repeat incidents), illegal fox hunting (arrests and ongoing prosecutions), and offences such as hare coursing and badger set destruction. Investigative support has strengthened outcomes in serious cases, including animal cruelty investigations resulting in charges and remand, alongside identification of linked offending. Additional outcomes include a court conviction for breach of a Community Behaviour Order, Community Resolutions with compensation for livestock worrying, and seizures of prohibited wildlife artefacts (CITES items). Collectively, this reflects a consistent, intelligence-informed approach delivering visible enforcement, strong outcomes and sustained disruption of repeat and high-harm offenders.

4. EMERGING THEMES AND DEMAND

4.1 There is a small rising demand and emerging risk profile across several rural crime types, most notably linked to hunt-related activity. Reports of assaults and public order incidents associated with hunts are increasing, alongside heightened tensions between hunt groups and saboteurs following proposed legislative changes. This has driven increased policing demand and ongoing public safety concerns. Additional pressures include a continued threat from organised crime, a rise in illegal off-road vehicle use causing damage to land and byways, driven in part by low awareness and requiring both enforcement and education responses.

4.2 At the same time, there are clear areas of positive impact alongside emerging challenges. Targeted prevention activity has resulted in very low levels of GPS theft (2 offences in 2024 and 1 in 2025), demonstrating strong effectiveness compared to neighbouring forces. Persistent concerns also remain around wildlife crime (including unlawful killing of birds of prey) and theft trends such as heating oil.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In a previous report, the cost of kennelling of seized dogs was highlighted as an ongoing and unpredictable concern. Work on this issue has led to a new supplier of kennelling being identified, new procedures for the seizing of dogs and a new process to recover the costs of kennelling being established with our legal provider. Use of TORTS legislation allows rehoming of dogs swiftly to prevent undue costs to the force.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

6.1 There are no other implications and risks.

7. KEY LEGISLATURE AND POLICY CHANGES

7.1 The NPCC Rural and Wildlife Strategy 2025-2028 has been published (early 2026), and an internal strategy will be produced to align with this new strategy, including the new priority of tackling illegal hunting.

8. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

8.1 The Rural and Wildlife Policing Team continues to deliver a strong, intelligence-led and partnership driven response to rural crime, aligned to the Prepare, Prevent, Protect and

Pursue framework. Delivery reflects a clear focus on prevention, problem solving and targeted enforcement, with demonstrable impact across a range of priority areas.

- 8.2 The Team has strengthened capability through training and guidance, improved community confidence through visible engagement, and delivered effective investigative and enforcement outcomes, including disruption of high-harm offending, organised crime activity, and complex rural and wildlife crime investigations.

- 8.3 The operating environment is, experiencing marginal increases across several key crime types, including hunting-related incidents, rural acquisitive crime, and other emerging rural threats. While the Team continues to respond proactively, this reinforces the need for ongoing strong partnership working, and continued development of analytical capability to support effective tasking and deployment. Overall, RAWPT is performing well against strategic objectives, sustaining and building on this position will require continued focus on adaptability and alignment to evolving local and national priorities, particularly in tackling illegal hunting and organised rural criminality.