



ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO:

AP19/39

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
6 SEPTEMBER 2019**

SUBJECT: RURAL POLICING ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY:

1. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the work carried out during 2018/19 which relates to the policing of rural communities within Suffolk.
2. The report also provides an update on the progress for the delivery of the rural policing strategy and the relevant aspects of the Police and Crime Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the work undertaken by the Constabulary, as detailed in this annual report.

1. RURAL POLICING

- 1.1 In March 2017 the Constabulary launched the Rural Policing Strategy which identifies a number of key challenges faced by rural communities, and what measures the police will take to ensure we reduce crime and make our communities feel safe.
- 1.2 Launched with the support of the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union, the strategy also highlights the Constabulary's commitment to rural policing through the allocation of resources and training.
- 1.3 In 2018 the Constabulary made a number of additional changes to its local policing model including the introduction of three Neighbourhood Partnership Teams (NPTs). The West NPT Inspector was given operational responsibility for the Rural Policing Team under the strategic lead of the Western Area Commander (Superintendent), The Rural Policing Sergeant is based in the West CPC Command (Bury St Edmunds), and provides a coordinating role with the dedicated Rural Officers, Link Officers roles within Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Police Volunteers/Special Constabulary.
- 1.4 There are currently 16 members of staff who have received additional training relating to rural policing; this includes the two dedicated Rural Policing Officers; Rural Sergeant & Inspector; & Link Officers. Their role is to provide enhanced advice to colleagues, to come together as members of a larger single team for bespoke rural crime operations, and provide engagement with rural communities. Of those, five have received further training in tackling wildlife crime, with one further booked on a course in September 2019. Policing issues of rural crime remains the responsibility of all of the Constabulary.
- 1.5 The Rural Policing Team has now been in existence for two years and is well embedded within the County Policing Command model. The team will adopt responsibility for investigating crimes which require specialist knowledge such as offences committed against wildlife, including illegal hunting, poaching and trapping, unlawful trade in endangered species, theft of livestock and dogs worrying livestock. Members of the Rural Policing Team also provide tactical advice across local policing. To date Rural Policing Officers have investigated 130 crimes. In addition to this, reports of crime and direct calls are dealt with which takes a significant amount of work away from the Contact and Control Room (CCR) as a result of many wildlife organisations and rural community members having access to our direct contact details.
- 1.6 The Team has also managed specific operations to tackle organised crime such as patrols directed at deer poaching on the county's farms. This has received positive feedback from landowners as their presence has a significant impact upon their income as a result of deer stalkers paying to stalk deer in Suffolk, as well as damage to crops and thefts. Op Galileo targets Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) involved in Hare Coursing. As a result of the closed circles these offenders mix within, gathering intelligence in advance is challenging. The addition of drone technology will assist in this area. Hare Coursing patrols have resulted in the arrest of approximately 10 individuals, with approximately the same numbers reported for summons at the roadside. In addition to this, at least three others have had dispersal orders served upon them to keep them out of the county, as well as the use of ASB legislation to serve Community Protection Notice (CPN) warning letters on those that are caught.
- 1.7 Hunt meetings in Suffolk are held every weekend from October through to March, often with multiple hunts out at the same time. Intelligence is used to ascertain

those hunts which are most likely to be targeted by anti-hunt activity and resources deployed accordingly. As a result of the firm but fair way these are policed and the engagement with both sides, this reduces the need to deal with offences as many issues are identified at a very early stage. At least five individuals have been prosecuted at hunts for motoring offences, three for criminal damage and at least four individuals have been dealt with for violence offences. These have been from both sides of this emotive issue. Of note was the successful operation on 26 December 2017, which resulted in Suffolk's first conviction for illegal hunting by an organised hunt. This had a hugely positive impact on the Constabulary's reputation and has increased confidence levels amongst those involved in preventing animal cruelty. At least 12 intelligence reports have been submitted which are specific to organise hunts.

- 1.8 The Team has continued to create an excellent network of rural community contacts both within Suffolk and nationally. The Suffolk Team works closely with other forces and the NPT Inspector currently chairs the Regional Wildlife Enforcement Group, consisting of all of the Eastern Region forces. The regional meeting provides the conduit between each Constabulary and the national rural crime meeting, presided over by the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and the new NPCC lead for wildlife and rural crime.
- 1.9 In terms of ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) a nationally based trainer has visited Suffolk on several occasions during the previous year, and delivered training on hare coursing and issues surrounding badgers. This training was offered not only to the Rural Policing Team but also the network of Rural Link Officers, Special Constables and Police Volunteers across the force.
- 1.10 The Rural Policing Team has now taken delivery of a drone and the whole team are accredited by the CAA to pilot it. Whilst this is being used mainly for rural incidents, it has also been used for more general policing tasks, supporting the Joint Police and Fire Drone Team, where risk dictates that it can be deployed more quickly than the Joint Drone Team.

2. RURAL CRIME

- 2.1 There is still no nationally recognised definition for 'rural crime'. There has been a new NPCC lead appointed for both rural and wildlife crime and this definition is to be addressed as a priority. Once in place this will make researching rural crime more straightforward across not only Suffolk, but nationally.
- 2.2 The Joint Strategic, Business and Operational Services (SBOS) department has created a new rural crime dashboard which provides crime statistics via the Microsoft PowerBI platform. This has been developed for both Norfolk and Suffolk forces and in consultation with the NPT Inspector. Once quality assured it will be made available to all staff.
- 2.3 The Rural Policing Team takes its priorities from both national priorities and those more specific to Suffolk. These are updated on a quarterly basis and are currently:-
 - Rural Thefts (plant, machinery, diesel and technology – locally identified priority);
 - Hare Coursing (national & local priority);
 - Other Poaching (national priority);
 - Raptor Persecution (national priority);
 - Damage to habitat, including off-road driving (national & local priority);
 - Heritage Crime (including church lead theft (national & local priority);
 - Other Metal Theft (locally identified priority).

- 2.4 The crime statistics for Suffolk show an overall drop in rural crime from 2016 – 2018. In 2018/19 there has been a decrease in reported incidents of hare coursing, down 50% on those reported the year before (which is broadly reflected across the Eastern Region). Despite the reduction in incidents, hare coursing will feature as a high priority area for the Rural Policing Team over the coming months. This is because it is a national priority, and there has been a national rise in the violence against officers and landowners by hare coursers. **Figures relating to a number of crime types are shown at Appendix 1.**
- 2.5 The Rural Policing Team has commissioned work by West Suffolk College to produce a short film about hare coursing to raise awareness for both the public and a more detailed version to train officers in dealing with hare coursing/courers. Funding was provided by the Hare Preservation Trust. The film is now available on the internet.

3. DELIVERING ON THE RURAL POLICING STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Rural Policing Strategy contains four key areas of activity under the headings of Prevention, Enforcement, Intelligence and Reassurance.
- 3.2 These four areas of focus, which are underpinned with a separate delivery plan, form the basis of the day to day activity of the staff, which is managed through a tasking and performance framework set by the NPT Inspector with responsibility for rural policing.
- 3.3 This NPT Inspector provides a monthly update to the Western Area Commander regarding activity completed by the Rural Policing Team, emerging crime patterns during the previous month and priorities for the forthcoming period. Any significant national rural crime and wildlife crime initiatives are added to the force calendar.
- 3.4 In addition to its own performance framework, successful delivery on the Strategy is also gauged on an increase in public confidence and satisfaction in the police. This encompasses wider elements of policing in rural areas, such as how well the Constabulary deals with victims of crime in cases of domestic abuse, and is ultimately reviewed at a strategic level through the Public Confidence Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable.
- 3.5 The points below provide a summary of the activity under the four key headings.

Prevention

- 3.6 In addition to the proactive operations indicated above, the Rural Policing Team has executed a number of search warrants for more unusual wildlife crime. Examples include an operation to tackle the illegal export of ivory, and an operation in support of the RSCPA in relation to animal cruelty allegations.
- 3.7 Funding has been gained to train an additional officer on the national wildlife course (September 2019). It is important for there to be an adequate number of such officers across the county in order to provide specialist knowledge and advice, and maximise effective evidence gathering and prosecution.
- 3.8 The Rural Policing Team now works closely with and coordinates the Police Volunteers on Horseback scheme, providing training and guidance as to what to look for/be aware of while riding in our rural areas. The volunteers' coordinator is also currently considering a business case for the creation of a volunteer group

based around farm workers, whose observations would be a useful addition in developing intelligence and combatting rural crime.

- 3.9 The Special Constabulary, which has continually supported the policing of rural communities, joined the Rural Policing Team as a dedicated Rural and Marine (RAM) Unit. This Team help support planned operations as well as providing patrols and engagement within the community. The team are shortly to receive a new officer (training in September 2019) who was previously a Rural Crime volunteer. He will be the first Special to be posted directly to the Rural Policing Team.
- 3.10 The Rural Policing Team's Engagement Strategy is built upon a combination of effective use of technology and face to face public meetings. Specifically:-
- The Constabulary continues to use Police Connect as a messaging forum to help provide and request information, and to provide reassurance to the public. Messages are sent/received as either an email or text message. During 2018/19 507 messages were disseminated via this method. The system is popular with 5,562 members from rural communities in Suffolk. The messages assist in building trust in the Constabulary, increase community-based intelligence and mitigate fear of crime;
 - The Rural Policing Team has renewed its contract with "FAST SMS" messaging service to provide immediate updates to those signed up to it, typically on the movement of known hare coursers' vehicles within the county. This links in with the Norfolk system so allows coverage of the two counties, based on geographical policing areas and a specific hare coursing group. This system is divided into four groups making the information very specific to particular areas. At present, there are 300 individuals associated with these groups that receive alerts via this method in Suffolk alone. Some of the 300 individuals will be signed up to more than one group, and the team continues to sign up victims of crime, in order to develop this further;
 - The team engage with the farming community via coordinating regular "Barn Meetings" across the County. This provides rural crime officers with the opportunity to provide the latest crime patterns, intelligence briefings and practical crime prevention advice. The next stage for development is for the team to undertake even more comprehensive advance planning of these meetings, thus enabling greater promotion and increased attendance.
- 3.11 The team continues to train supervisors, probationers and the Contact and Control Room (CCR) staff to ensure the correct response to rural crime. This training also highlights the links between rural crime and OCGs.

Enforcement

- 3.12 A new Joint Force Hunt Policy has been drafted and awaits ratification by the Assistant Chief Constable.
- 3.13 With the harvest imminent, incidents of hare coursing are predicted to rise as is typically seen year on year. National work is ongoing, supported by the National Wildlife Crime Unit, spearheaded by Lincolnshire Police to provide a more "joined up" approach to coursing and coursers.
- 3.14 Regional days of action will be undertaken by the Eastern Region forces in collaboration with one another. This is done by way of communicating agreed dates with each other, which are kept strictly confidential. Each force shares contact details of neighbouring forces on duty that day, in order to alert each other at an

early stage are on coursing activity, with a view to intercepting and tackling the offenders. All hare coursing intelligence is shared with all Eastern Region forces, as well as Lincolnshire Police, to ensure that those causing the most harm are targeted in an organised way, utilising ASB legislation where appropriate to restrict their ability to offend. ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) will be utilised to identify when known coursers are moving within or entering the county, with the Rural Policing Team drone deployed, to support ground-based officers in tracing, locating and detaining suspects.

- 3.15 Metal theft continues to be an area of priority for Suffolk Constabulary Rural Policing Team due to the rising value of scrap metal & the associated link to an increase in such crime. The Team are planning an operation to coincide with the Rural Crime National Week of Action. The provisional operational planning seeks to uplift the knowledge and understanding amongst officers of scrap metal theft and employ the support of SNT's in order to conduct site visits and checks of waste metal carriers and scrap yards. This will be supported with a media/social media campaign.
- 3.16 In October this year the Constabulary will participate in the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) national week of action targeting rural crime. A comprehensive plan will be in place for this week.

Intelligence

- 3.17 The use of ANPR forms an important part of gathering intelligence, but also ensures that the Constabulary can provide effective enforcement and prevention when dealing with rural crime. The dedicated team for rural policing, which is a countywide resource, has full use of ANPR technology within their patrol vehicles, which can be utilised both passively and proactively.
- 3.18 The Rural Communities Advisory Group has undergone some difficulty over the last 12 months (this is a Multi-Agency group consisting of all key stakeholders in rural crime). An independent chair had been appointed but regrettably was unable to attend any of the meetings. The Constabulary is temporarily chairing the group whilst the process to identify a new independent chair is underway.

Reassurance

- 3.19 Reassurance is provided using a number of strands including media; enforcement; visibility and engagement.
- 3.20 Regular media broadcasts are conducted on Radio Suffolk by the Rural Policing Team Sergeant. This provides those with an interest in rural issues to access bespoke advice. This is supported by other media formats such as social media accounts specifically discussing rural crime.
- 3.21 Regular meetings are held between the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowner's Association to establish what the membership of each organisation are reporting to them. The Rural Policing Team regularly contribute to the NFU newsletter and the West NPT Inspector provided a short presentation at the NFU's "breakfast meeting" earlier in the year.
- 3.22 Regular "barn meetings" continue around the county, promoting how the Constabulary is tackling rural crime and to address rural issues on a local level. These meeting continue to be well supported with typically 15-25 farmers/farm workers attending, depending on locations and time of year within the farming calendar.

4 SPECIALS AND POLICE VOLUNTEERS

- 4.1 The Special Constabulary and Police Volunteers continue to provide a supporting role to rural policing.
- 4.2 A selected group of two Special Constables have now formed a dedicated team for rural policing (The Rural and Marine Team), working with their full-time colleagues. They receive on the job training and are invited to CPD inputs. Examples of their deployments include assisting in hare coursing and deer poaching patrols, as well as high visibility patrols in theft hotspots, where they provide reassurance and engage with rural communities. An extra Special Constable has signed up and will be joining the team in due course.
- 4.3 The Rural Policing Team also has three volunteers, two of whom are newly recruited. These staff provide an important support function to the wider Rural Policing Team. Specifically, one is working on heritage crime in order for us to understand the county's assets and help us target those areas where this is prevalent, such as theft and nighthawking offences. Another provides specialist knowledge in relation to offences committed against wildlife, with an extensive knowledge of ecology. The third will be trained in providing bespoke crime prevention advice to farms and rural communities, in order to help residents, protect their properties.
- 4.4 As mentioned in paragraph 3.8, the Rural Policing Team also co-ordinates and the Police Volunteers on Horseback, providing training and guidance, intelligence updates and practical advice regarding patrolling, all of which maximises the effectiveness of this team. Closer liaison between the Rural Policing Team and Volunteers on horseback has been welcome, with the notable benefit of providing intelligence opportunities.
- 4.5 Next steps include an exploration and feasibility study of a Volunteer Farm Workers Network. This scheme is akin to Street Watch for the farming community, providing up to date information for those on the scheme, whilst providing farmers with the opportunity to notify the police and other farmers of suspicious activity. By persuading farmers to report suspicious activity, or to be on the look-out for a particular vehicle/person, it is hoped that their presence in the countryside could provide a crucial addition to combatting rural crime.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/RESOURCES

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to note.

6 OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 6.1 Inspector Andrew Martin will replace Inspector Nick Stonehouse, as the Neighbourhood Policing Team Inspector, in September 2019. Inspector Martin brings previous experience as the Stowmarket Locality Inspector, Response Inspector (South and West) and tactical lead for stop search and ride-along schemes to the rural crime portfolio. He is also a firm advocate of cadet schemes having coordinated the Stowmarket cadets for the past 3 years. His appointment will provide the opportunity for a fresh perspective and approach.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	NO
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	NO
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	YES
Have human resource implications been considered?	YES
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	YES
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	YES
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	YES
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	YES

Appendix 1

These are based on all crimes that are tagged as rural crime.

Crime	2016	2017	2018	2019 (so far)	Total
AGGRAVATED VEHICLE TAKING		3			3
ARSON	15	11	11	3	40
BICYCLE THEFT	1		1		2
BURGLARY - BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY		46	89	40	175
BURGLARY - RESIDENTIAL		24	56	21	101
BURGLARY IN A DWELLING	16	2			18
BURGLARY NON-DWELLING	145	37			182
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	84	66	51	20	221
INTERFERING WITH A MOTOR VEHICLE	4	4	1	2	11
MISC CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY	7	7	7	0	21
OTHER OFFENCES PUBLIC ORDER	1		1		2
OTHER THEFT	99	108	113	52	372
POSSESSION OF WEAPONS	1	1	3	0	5
PUBLIC FEAR, ALARM OR DISTRESS	5	11	8	2	26
SHOPLIFTING	2	1	2	0	5
THEFT FROM A VEHICLE	17	15	12	7	51
THEFT FROM THE PERSON	1				1
THEFT OR UNAUTH TAKING OF A MOTOR VEH	7	10	11	2	30
VIOLENCE WITH INJURY	3	11	2	2	18
VIOLENCE WITHOUT INJURY	15	17	4	1	37
Grand Total	423	374	372	152	1321