

Tackling Rural Crime

Since the implementation of the Rural Crime Plan in December 2021 Nottinghamshire Police and partners have made changes to improve our overall response to our rural communities. The NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report 2022 highlighted that nationally Rural Crime is a concern to 50% of the rural community and rural theft cost the UK an estimated £40.5M in 2021. Whilst Nottinghamshire did not feature as one of the ten worst affected counties, by cost claims in 2021, we are neighboured by both Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, who ranked at position one and four respectively, therefore it is vital we remain robust in our approach to rural crime.

As set out in the Rural Crime Plan, we have now implemented a range of activities to better support our rural communities:

There is a **dedicated Rural Crime page** on Nottinghamshire Police's new Single Online Home website, this contains advice and information, crime prevention guides, an online reporting tool and signposting to Neighbourhood Alert.

We have re-launched our **Horse Watch** social media page and have an Equine Crime lead officer for the force. They share crime prevention messages with the equine community and provide engagement opportunities to understand issues that concern them. They also coordinate equine days of action, such as the 'pass wide and slow' awareness campaign that seeks to raise awareness on how to pass all vulnerable road users and educate drivers who do not comply.

We have launched a bespoke **Rural Neighbourhood Alert program**, at the request of the community. This allows our Rural Officers to provide crime prevention advice, good news stories and updates directly to the community in an email format they can easily access.

Every quarter we produce a **Rural and Wildlife Crime Newsletter** and share with our stakeholders and the public. This covers matters at a more strategic level and shows how we are delivering against our Rural Crime Plan and our commitments moving forward.

We have updated and refreshed our sections within the **Rural Community Safety folder**, this is a partnership document that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service distribute. It contains crime prevention advice, firearms licensing guidance and details on how to report crime and ASB.

In April 2022 we held our first **Rural Crime Showcase** event at Newark Showground. Hundreds of visitors attended to learn more about the various police teams working to keep the safe, from the off-road bikes, underwater search teams and the drone team. Visitors took the chance to speak directly to rural officers and partners about key issues and concerns.

Senior officers have committed to annual '**Open Barn meetings**' where members of the rural community have an opportunity to speak directly with the strategic lead for rural crime. This event took place in June 2021 and June 2022 where we visited three farms across Nottinghamshire during the day. Feedback from the visits in 2022 was more positive than the meetings in 2021. The community recognised the steps Nottinghamshire Police were taking to keep them safe.

Our Neighbourhood Officers who working in rural community's form part of the Rural Officer Cohort, they receive two **Continued Professional Development** days each year. During these days they receive sessions from partners such as the National Farms Union and County Land Alliance which helps improve their understanding of the needs of the rural communities, their concerns, and the tools available to officers to better support them. Newly appointed officers are also programmed to receive a shorter rural crime awareness input upon joining the force, as part of their initial training.

We have a newly appointed **Rural Partnerships Officer** who is responsible for supporting the strategic lead in delivering the Rural Crime Plan and supporting the rural community through engagement and partnership work.

We have appointed **twelve rural crime single points of contact (SPOC)** within the control room, they receive additional training in rural and wildlife crime and receive regular information and intelligence to help them better understand the issues, crime patterns and emerging MO's. They provide advice and guidance to colleagues who are dealing with the rural community to ensure we get the right response at the point of first contact. In addition, all members of the control room have received awareness training, delivered by the NFU. This has improved their understanding of the impact that rural crime has, again giving them the knowledge to offer an improved level of service to callers. We have committed to deliver this training again in Spring 2023 to ensure their knowledge is current.

Rural officers are responsible for delivering **rural crime education sessions** for young people in their area. Officers in Newark have delivered Operation Swift, which was established to address ASB issues caused by young people using catapults and slingshots to shoot wildlife, therefore committing wildlife offences. In addition to covert enforcement activity, rural officers have provided a presentation to Years 5 and 6 at every primary school in Newark to highlight the ASB and effect this is having on our local community, this gives our children the knowledge and interest in their environment and helps them to take positive ownership of it.

We have also undertaken bespoke **rural restorative justice and focused education programs**. Groups of children who are already involved in anti-social behaviour or rural crimes, have been identified by partners and are invited to work with the police and staff at Hill Holt Wood, a local woodland social enterprise. This gives the police the opportunity to engage with these groups in a positive way and allows them to engage in the outdoors positively too. The long-term plan here is, with assistance of Hill Holt Wood, for local youths to give something back to the local green spaces. That could be woodland management, building bat boxes, litter picking etc. Two young males who had admitted hare coursing offences attended such a program at Hill Holt Wood and provided positive feedback about their experience and their improved views of the rural community in which they live.

The **off-road motorbike team** is made up of 15 officers who now deploy across the force, as well as undertaking patrol and enforcement activity, they have developed an engagement and education program that they can either deliver either as a session to a youth group, or share with riders in the community through a QR coded leaflet, which highlights the various offences and signposts them to legal off road riding location.