

Rural Crime newsletter

September 2020 (Autumn Edition)

I have the pleasure of introducing the first forcewide publication of the Rural Affairs Team across the counties of Devon and Cornwall. The team's primary aim is to increase our rural communities confidence in policing by; problem solving issues in partnership, instigating preventative initiatives and undertaking community engagement events, so we can listen to the public and explain what action we are undertaking.

The strategy and priorities for the team are based on the 2018 National Police Chiefs Rural Affairs Strategy, this ensures we are directly linked to the National agenda and provides consistency when we are operating with our regional colleagues on cross border issues.

The Rural Affairs team consists of; four Rural Neighbourhood Beat Managers; Kerry Whitting, Martin Beck, Julian Fry and Chris Collins, alongside a dedicated Rural Engagement Team who are Special Police Constables. They operate at a tactical level, coordinating activity with the local policing teams and strategic partners.

This publication will provide an overview of the work the team have been undertaking. This year has been unique due to the COVID 19 pandemic, and the team have used this time to build strong foundations by writing processes, policies and toolkits which will enable us to really engage with a purpose as the government guidelines allow.

Please follow the team using our two Twitter pages:

@DCPoliceRural_D (Devon)

@DCPoliceRural_C (Cornwall)



Inspector Rob Bolt
Neighbourhood Policing Lead



Devon & Cornwall Police

Devon & Cornwall Police
Rural Affairs



Working in partnership to protect rural communities

Meet the team



Inspector Rob Bolt
Neighbourhood Policing Lead
Headquarters



Sgt. Victoria Grimwood
Neighbourhood Development
Headquarters



PC Chris Collins
Rural Crime
Cornwall



PC Jules Fry
Rural Crime
Cornwall



PC Martin Beck
Rural Crime
Devon



PC Kerry Whitting
Rural Crime
Devon

Crime Trends

Over recent months we have seen numerous crime reports relating to livestock, these include incidents livestock worrying with the majority of incidents occurring on moorland areas and on rights of way over farmland. The theft of Livestock including cattle and sheep has featured ranging from the theft of small numbers to over one hundred animals in one incident.

Agricultural machinery specifically the theft of quad bikes continues to feature although at a small level and we have seen quads stolen from barns and sheds as well as in the open.



Nationally there has been an increase in thefts of Starfire GPS systems fitted to tractors, we have seen a handful of incidents in our force area and we will continue to monitor the emerging threat. Prevention and problem solving activity continues to develop in relation to all of these issues and it is a timely reminder to ensure that the appropriate security is present on buildings, vehicles and machinery and anyone able to offer information regarding rural crime is asked to email 101@dc.police.uk call 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

Rural Crime Initiatives

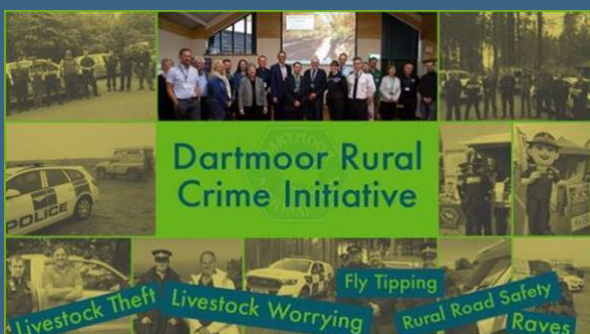
Both of our National Parks and Bodmin Moor now host a collaborative partnership of statutory and non-statutory partners who have the tools and resources to ensure that our uplands and Parks are safe environments for local communities, businesses and visitors alike. The Partnerships will look to deliver a commitment which will synergise resources, legal powers and intelligence of each partner to address common priorities in terms of rural crime and safety.



The initiatives have set common priorities and agree specific partnership action plans to address these goals and will focus specifically on issues impacting the Parks and moorland. Exmoor's priority areas are currently Poaching, Illegal off-roading and fly tipping. Dartmoor's priorities are on Rave reduction, Road safety and livestock RTC casualties, Fly tipping and Livestock theft. Bodmin's priorities are livestock worrying, illegal off-roading and road safety in relation to livestock

Rural Crime Officers will work with local policing teams to develop tactics and solutions with the partners and as we work within the initiatives they endeavour to build strong working relationships and best practice to share any good work created in other parts of the force. The RAO's will also assist the partners and the police communicate and collaborate on a number of other issues the Park's and uplands face.

Some of the examples working towards the initiative priorities are below. If you would like more information about any of these schemes please contact the Rural Affairs Team.



Livestock worrying

The Rural crime team have initiated a livestock worrying campaign across the force area working with partners and the community to raise awareness of the issue of livestock worrying and encourage reporting. Targeted activity with local policing teams and partners has been undertaken at various areas including Bodmin moor and Dartmoor. We have been engaging with dog walkers and educating them on the restrictions involved when visiting land designated as access or common land.

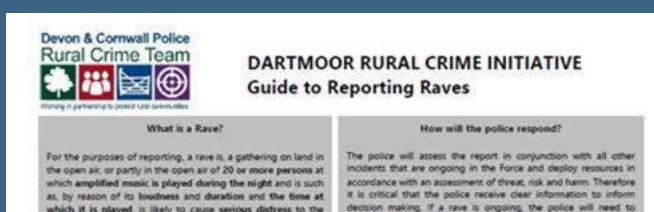


No Cold Callers scheme for farmers

Devon and Cornwall Police's Rural Crime Officers are working in partnership with Trading Standards and NFU Mutual representatives to help protect farmers from travelling criminals who "cold call" at farms across the region. As part of the scheme farmers are being offered the No Cold Caller sign to display at the entrances to their farm warning cold callers and rogue traders to stay away and carrying the message, "We won't buy from you, we won't sell to you" and which is used in conjunction with Farm Watch and Devon & Cornwall Alert and engagement with the neighbourhood police team. Fear of crimes like this can exacerbate feeling of isolation among farmers and the health and wellbeing of rural residents. This is an opportunity for the police to show support to rural communities and tackle the problem of travelling criminals. Aggressive and persistent actions of those cold calling can now be collated across the force and intervention put in place to those responsible.

Raves

Dartmoor National Park Authority, Forestry England, local community members and various functions within the police service have examined the harm caused by raves and illegal gatherings/unlicensed music events in the Park. Dartmoor has consistently hosted the highest number of raves/illegal gatherings in the force area. This has led to a detrimental effect on the quality of life on some of the local residents, damage to the environment and risk of harm to those attending and road users. The rural crime initiative has coordinated an approach to analyse the issues and work with partners to target harden and engineer improvements to gates at key risk sites preventing access. The initiative is now working with the local community to minimise the impact of gatherings and intervene early before they get big by a coordinated early warning arrangement with the community on key days and locations combined supplemented by joint intervention patrols by Initiative members, local police and the Rural Engagement Team.



Contacts for use in case of Raves/Illegal Gatherings/Unlicensed Music Events:

DNPA emergency officer: 07711 856206

Forestry England (South Devon Community Ranger – emergency only) 07990848720

Community Safety

Pressures and challenges on people living and working in rural areas are quite unique and the current CV-19 pandemic has only served to heighten this. Farmers and farming families across the UK are highly susceptible to poor mental wellbeing including stress, anxiety and depression – and sadly, more than one member of the farming community dies by suicide every week. Through our extensive list of contacts and partners, the Rural Affairs team has been championing the case to raise awareness of vulnerable groups and what can be done to support them.

The Farming Community Network (FCN) is a voluntary organisation and charity which provides support to farmers and families within the farming community. They run a confidential national helpline and e-helpline which is open every day of the year from 0700 to 2300 hrs and offer free confidential, pastoral and practical help with staff travelling over 130, 000 miles a year to see clients.



Click here for a link to the FCN website: <https://fcn.org.uk/>



FCN's Farmwell Initiative is another excellent place to signpost farmers towards as it provides information, support and resilience with an emphasis on planning for the future which is often difficult in the farming profession for a variety of reasons. It currently has some superb Covid 19 guidance tailored to farming and rural families which includes the excellent Yellow Wellies Campaign <https://farmwell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/04/copewithstressesofcovid19.pdf>

The Rural Affairs Team has been and will continue to work towards supporting farmers and their families through this difficult time by continued close-working with the FCN, community engagement and social media.

Equine Crime

Unfortunately, equine crime is a persistent issue and when horses, ponies, tack and equipment are stolen it can be distressing for those owners.

Over the coming months the Rural Affairs Team will be working to minimise the occurrences of these types of crimes.

We will be promoting the Horse Watch scheme through various methods aiming to increase force wide membership. Through the scheme horse owners will be given help and advice to improve yard and field security and protect their horses and equipment. Horse Watch also aims to increase the reporting of incidents and improve communication between the equine community and police.

To find out more or join the scheme (which is totally free of charge) visit:

<https://alerts.dc.police.uk/>

Engagement

Prior to Covid-19, the Rural Affairs Team were busy carrying out a wide range of engagement events in the community. We assisted with rural crime surgeries at agricultural merchants, attended farmers markets across the Force area on a regular basis, and we participated in a number of rural/agricultural events taking place across the two Counties. This strategy placed us at the heart of the farming community, breaking down any barriers that might exist and building rapport and confidence with the wider public. Whilst Covid-19 restrictions have temporarily paused this progress we have continued to work hard on developing our virtual presence on-line. The Rural Affairs Team already have a significant footprint on the Force website with lots of links to rural crime campaigns, links to a variety of rural watch schemes, and useful documents and guidance. However we are now in the process of re-visiting these pages to make them even more informative and current. Social Media is also really important with the team regularly tweeting on our two twitter accounts @DCPoliceRural_C (Cornwall) and @DCPoliceRural_D (Devon) With thousands of followers this is proving to be a really effective way of promoting our campaigns and monthly rural crime themes.

The team is also looking to improve internal working practices to make it easier for officers to find guidance on particular rural crimes. To this end we are producing 'toolkits' that officers can use to assist with rural crimes and the investigatory response. These will be on the Force intranet for all to access in due course.



Equine Safety

Each year the British Horse Society collects data on the number of accidents/collisions involving horses on the UK's roads which are reported to them. Their research shows that a high percentage of these incidents are caused by vehicles passing either too close and/or too fast.

In response to this, The Rural Affairs Team will be working towards raising the profile of Operation Snap. This is a country-wide initiative for all road users – including horse riders.

Anyone wearing a camera device who is subject of an incident on the road can go online and submit footage and images directly to the police.

This will allow positive action whereby those who drive dangerously and compromise the safety of others can be dealt with. It is hoped this scheme will reduce the number of fatal or serious road related accidents that occur on our roads.

You can find out more about the scheme and report an incident here:

<https://operationsnap.devon-cornwall.police.uk/>





The Countryside Code is a set of simple rules which guide users of the coast and countryside to RESPECT, PROTECT, and ENJOY. However, when this guidance isn't followed, crimes occur, and community tension can develop. Since the onset of Covid-19 and as the country moves into 'recovery' we have seen a huge increase in the amount of people visiting our force area. This has placed an enormous pressure on the countryside, and it has become increasingly obvious that the basic principles of the Code are not being followed by some visitors or are simply not understood.

The Rural Affairs Team has been engaging with a wide variety of key partners and agencies and over the summer months will be delivering a campaign designed to get the message of the Countryside Code out to as many people as possible. Strategies will include the use of social media, targeted input aimed at pre and post teens and direct promotion by partner agencies and key businesses within the industry. We will be linking into our Neighbourhood Beat Teams, who already have strong links within the local rural communities and will be ideally placed to assist with this initiative.

For full, abbreviated and Covid-19 versions of the Code visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

DC Alert and Farm Watch

Devon & Cornwall Alert continues to play a significant part in our rural crime prevention activity. A two way messaging system that allows us to connect with our communities and we utilise the platform to circulate key prevention messages and crime appeals.



The system allows people who register to choose the type of information they would like to receive and provides an opportunity to join watch a variety of watch schemes such as farm watch and Horse watch. Farm watch membership currently stands at over 4300 people and allows us to communicate specific messages directly to individuals and business that it affects.

alerts.dc.police.uk

Problem Solving:

Dash Camera Road Safety Project launched on Bodmin Moor

Bodmin Moor recently became the first part of the UK to run a unique community project to help improve road safety and reduce the number of livestock that are killed or injured on its roads each year.

The Dash Camera Road Safety Project, launched as part of the Bodmin Moor Rural Crime initiative, a partnership forum that includes representatives from agencies and groups such as the Association of Bodmin Moor Landowners and Bodmin Moor Commons Council involved almost 100 local farmers, landowners and members of the community alongside partners from, Cornwall Fire & Rescue Service and Forestry England.

Those participating in the project will be provided with dash cameras and encouraged to record and submit incidents which put either animals or other road users in danger. These incidents could range from traffic offences and collisions involving livestock as well as anti-social behaviour, and will be uploaded and acted upon via Devon & Cornwall Police's Operation Snap initiative. (<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/opsnap>).

The project has been funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Cornwall Community Foundation's Crimebeat Fund. Police and Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez, said: "On a daily basis, communities across Cornwall are being affected by people driving dangerously so it's absolutely right that I should try to help those communities do something about it." prevent accidents and ultimately save lives."

PC Chris Collins rural affairs officer for Devon & Cornwall Police who initiated the project, said "We are seeing significant numbers of animals killed or injured by road users on Bodmin Moor each year. During 2019 over 70 sheep, cows and ponies were killed or injured and this year already, a further 30 animals have been killed or injured. This project will not only support our local farmers and landowners, but also help to make the roads a safer place for livestock and all moorland road users."

Op Aidant – The Rural Affairs Team contributed to the June/July phase of the multi partnership operation to raise awareness of modern Slavery and Labour Exploitation. Modern Slavery is often hidden in plain sight, this phase was to raise awareness of the issue within the agricultural sector in our counties. Too many unknowns caused by the effects of Covid-19 meant that gang master activity has the potential to operate and move onto our farms and in our rural communities. Working with local policing teams, Gang masters and Labour Abuse Authority, Corporate communications dept, force problem solvers, analysts and researches Rural Crime Officers cast its wide net to share information about the subject to a multitude of partner agencies and public groups to ensure everyone understands how to spot the signs of exploitation, understands their rights at work and knows how to contact the police if they have concerns. This has helped the agricultural and farming sector understand the potential risks and exposure to modern day slavery and equipped many with the tools needed to spot it.



Gangmasters &
Labour Abuse Authority

Victim of labour exploitation or modern slavery?

Want to speak out but not sure what will happen next?
The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority can help

What happens next?

- We will want to meet to discuss your situation. This conversation could also include other agencies
- Interpreters can be provided if necessary
- We will listen to your story and decide if you are a victim of labour exploitation
- You will be protected from those who did this to you
- Ongoing help and support will be made available
- You will be offered a medical check-up and given help if necessary
- Food and clothing can be provided if needed and you may be taken to a secure, safe place
- You will be given a period of time (45 days) to recover from your ordeal and decide on next steps
- You may be given assistance to return to your home country if you wish
- Access to wider support from a range of agencies can be made available

Don't be afraid, we are here to help you

Call **0800 432 0804** in confidence, confide in your manager or visit www.gla.gov.uk