

# RURAL & WILDLIFE POLICING STRATEGY

2023 - 2025



Foreword from  
Police and Crime Commissioner  
**TIM PASSMORE**



Rural crime is a clear priority in Suffolk's Police and Crime Plan even if it has not had the attention it deserves on the national agenda.

As PCC and in my previous life as a farmer, I have seen all too often at first-hand the impact of crime on rural communities.

Those of us who live and work in rural Suffolk know the impact it has – it can mean crops are ruined because they cannot be harvested, jobs and livelihoods are under threat and farmers' families end up living in fear of criminals targeting their property. Since becoming PCC in 2012 I have put the spotlight firmly on the issues facing our rural communities – whether it's the impact of domestic abuse, the growing menace of fly tipping or attacks on our rural heritage sites. Tackling and preventing rural crime is a key priority in my Police and Crime Plan. No individual or organisation can tackle the challenges of rural crime alone so we will continue work with our existing partners, and reach out to new partners, to keep our county safe.

As your PCC, and also the Chair of the National Rural Crime Network, I am totally committed to ensuring the Constabulary has the resources it needs to tackle rural crime and keep you safe.

Suffolk Constabulary prides itself in playing our part in keeping the county one of the safest in England. Underpinning our continued success is the firm understanding of what our communities need through a strong focus on local people and partnership working.

Our rural landscape requires a tailored approach to preventing and detecting crime. We will continue to work in the community, building relationships with a compassionate and professional attitude, having the courage to tackle those issues that specifically cause our rural areas the most harm.

We have seen a growth in cyber enabled rural and wildlife offences, particularly through serious and organised crime groups. This type of crime, whilst often unseen, can cause a significant increase in the fear of crime particularly for farmers and businesses. Using innovation to drive improvements in how we investigate offences and work with our victims will be key to reducing this fear.

A primary focus for us will be building the trust and confidence in our rural communities through visibility, engagement, and feeding back on the positive results achieved in rural settings. It is essential that those more vulnerable, who may feel they do not have a voice, know how to reach us and for us to reach them.

We have a strong network with partner agencies across the country who share our drive to protect our countryside and those using it from criminality and serious harm. The Rural Crime and Policing Team have established relationships that promote the development of intelligence, that supports and promotes an increasing volunteer cohort, and helps shape best practice to tackle our priorities.

To deliver against this strategy, we will focus our immediate attention on putting our victims first, maximising investigative opportunities to get the right outcomes. The Rural and Wildlife Policing Team will continue to share their specialist knowledge and skills with colleagues across the county to promote a stronger response to emerging threats and community needs.

We continue to strive to do more for our rural areas. In this strategy we have identified the key crime types that we will focus on to make our countryside safer. We outline how we will prepare ourselves to meet the changing demands, how we will prevent criminality from impacting our communities, and how we will protect our residents from rising crime trends. It demonstrates how we will pursue the perpetrators of crime, seeking strong outcomes through the criminal justice system and focussing our attention on partnerships with key stakeholders on those areas of most concern.

Introduction from  
Chief Constable  
**RACHEL KEARTON**



# THE CONTEXT:

Suffolk Constabulary understands the importance of working with partners to tackle the most prevalent threats and emerging issues which have the greatest impact on our rural communities or wildlife, both economic and environmental. We recognise the impact of crime can be higher in rural communities who may feel particularly vulnerable because of their isolation.

The ethos of this strategy is underpinned by the commitment in the Police and Crime Plan 2022-2025 that states we will tackle rural and wildlife crime.

Suffolk Constabulary defines rural crime as any crime or series of crimes that causes significant harm or disruption to our rural communities and those who work within them. Examples of rural crime linked to this strategy are:



Equine crime (theft of horses, tack and equine equipment, and fly-grazing)



Livestock worrying offences



Heritage crime (any unlawful activity which harms historic assets including buildings, monuments, parks, gardens and landscapes)



Fly tipping



Theft offences related to farm vehicles, machinery and plant, agrichemical, fertiliser, and fuel

We define wildlife crime as any action which contravenes current legislation governing the protection of wild animals and plants. Examples of wildlife crime linked to this strategy are:

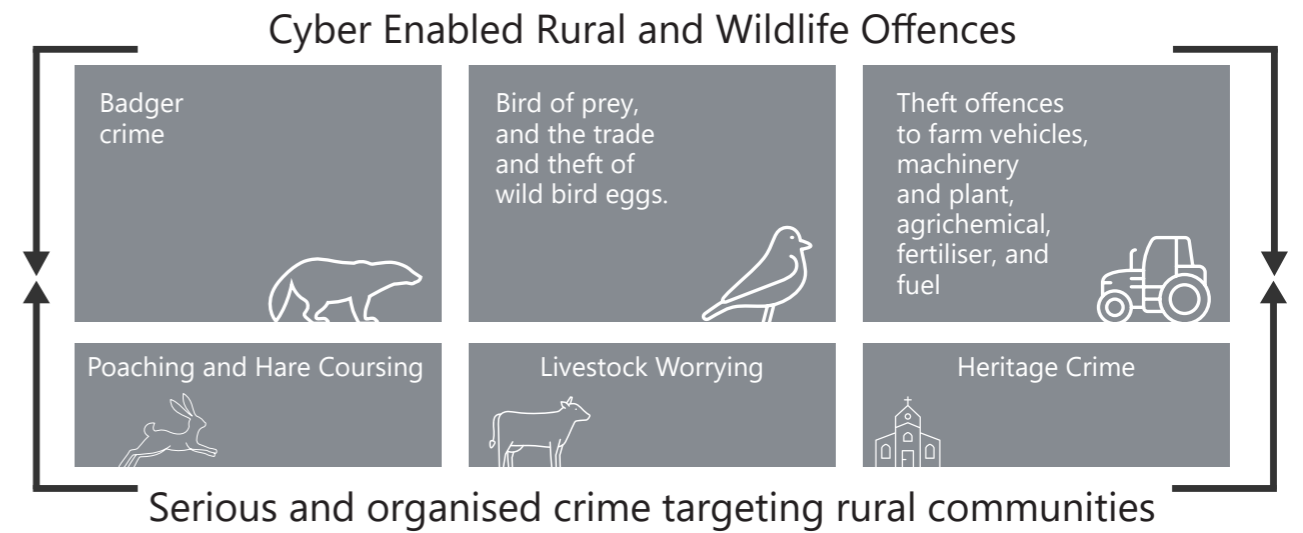
- Bat crime
- Poaching and hare coursing
- Badger crime
- CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species)
- Bird of prey crime
- Criminality against endangered native species (eg. Great Crested Newts/Otters)
- Theft and trade of wild bird eggs
- Illegal fox hunting





The Constabulary has structured this strategy around how it will **PREPARE**; **PREVENT**; **PROTECT** and **PURSUE**, to tackle rural and wildlife crime and bring to justice those who commit it.

In doing this, we will engage with our communities whilst prioritising the following types of offences when responding to rural and wildlife matters:



# PREPARE

**Utilise evidence and intelligence to evolve our response to the needs of rural communities**

## **We will:**

- Keep people informed and updated when they report a crime.
- Support effective engagement with rural communities with a focus on those more vulnerable or susceptible to rural and wildlife crime.
- Identify individuals and groups who cause the most harm to rural communities and wildlife by intelligence gathering.
- Work in partnership to reduce crime and protect rural communities.
- Use Police volunteers to increase visibility and engagement with rural communities, focussing recruitment campaigns on rural and vulnerable areas.
- Maximise the use of our volunteers on horseback.
- Support repeat victims, working with them to reduce the risk and fear of crime recurring.
- Use technology and innovation to protect communities and wildlife and prevent criminality.
- Continue to develop the skills within the NPT to enhance the service delivered by frontline officers.
- Take opportunities to work with the media, and to publish information about rural and wildlife policing to support public confidence.
- Work with partner agencies to support and invest in raising awareness, including where there are mechanisms nationally for victims of rural and wildlife crime, so the public and practitioners are supported to understand what is available.



# PREVENT

**Undertake activity to prevent rural and wildlife crime and deter criminals.**

## **We will:**

- Listen to the views of our rural communities to help shape our response to emerging threats and rural issues.
- Prevent and tackle rural and wildlife crime in hotspot areas using analysis and intelligence.
- Support problem-solving in rural communities, by investing in solutions which reduce reoffending, prevent crime, or improve community safety.
- Consider and implement initiatives that will reduce rural and wildlife crime.
- Increase the capacity and capability of assets and resources prepared to deliver the strategy.
- Encourage members of the public in rural communities to join police messaging systems including Police Connect, Suffolk Constabulary's community alert system. This will allow members of the public to be dynamically informed of incidents occurring, for us to receive community intelligence and provide crime prevention advice.



# PROTECT

**Take a proactive approach in tackling emerging rural issues whilst engaging with communities to understand their views and keep them informed and updated about the work of the Rural and Wildlife Policing Team.**

## **We will:**

- Arrange and take part in engagement events around the county with a focus on building relationships and sharing the work that we do.
- Improve engagement with harder to reach or vulnerable communities.
- Utilise social media to communicate and engage with the public and respond to feedback.
- Develop communication and engagement plans to promote education, operations, outcomes, and prevention work.
- Understand the impact of rural and wildlife crime on our communities, shaping our engagement and response to meet the needs of our victims.
- Work with the national Rural & Wildlife Priority Delivery Groups to share learning, best practice and intelligence.





# PURSUE

**Improve criminal justice outcomes and enhance community safety by targeting criminality that causes the most risk and harm to rural communities and bringing offenders to justice.**

## **We will:**

- Exploit opportunities for government or local funding which supports rural crime initiatives.
- Improve intelligence and information sharing among partners and enforcement agencies to target organised crime groups.
- Pursue serious and/or organised criminality across wildlife and rural crime focussing joint effort to reduce harm.
- Work with partners to obtain and develop intelligence on hidden harm crimes including human trafficking and modern slavery.
- Work closely with neighbouring forces to improve our understanding of cross-border criminality by sharing information with them and other organisations e.g. National Food Crime Unit, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and Federation of Small Businesses.
- Utilise an evidenced-based and problem-solving approach to focus a policing response on rural criminality.
- Focus activity on hotspot areas utilising the full range of assets to bring offenders to justice.



### **Resourcing the strategy:**

Suffolk Constabulary has a dedicated Rural and Wildlife Policing Team (RAWPT) which comprises subject matter experts, working within the County Policing Command (CPC). The Team works closely with partner agencies and dedicated rural crime resource from across the country to develop best practice, understand national and local trends, and to increase knowledge and awareness. The RAWPT will use engagement and problem-solving methodology to lead the delivery of this strategy and support the wider County Policing Command in reducing the threat of rural and wildlife crime and bringing offenders to justice.

Within the framework of CPC, local police officers will act as the link with key contacts within the community. These officers will work with the RAWPT in looking at sustainable, long-term solutions for those rural and wildlife crime types that continue to damage our communities. Local policing teams will hold responsibility for rural and wildlife priorities, linking in with the RAWPT to implement tactics that will reduce or remove the threat of harm, and improve the confidence and satisfaction of our communities.

The wider CPC resource are the first responders. They are responsible in the first instance of attending crime scenes, recording what has occurred and investigating criminal offences. Whilst in some instances, the RAWPT or local policing teams may take ownership of specific investigations, generally the responding officer will manage these but will be supported by RAWPT sharing key intelligence, tactics or legislative knowledge.

### **Special Constables and Volunteers**

The County Policing Command is supported by a team of volunteers that operate across a range of initiatives. We have a team of special constables experienced in rural crime matters who support our policing response to rural incidents such as hunts and hare coursing. They support our many engagement events across our county's rural locations to promote community safety and crime reduction initiatives and are assisted by the volunteer on horseback scheme who are often that visible presence in the harder to reach rural locations.

When delivering against the strategy, RAWPT will work with the Suffolk Constabulary analytical team to identify Force rural and wildlife priorities. Through the relevant area tasking meetings, resource will be requested to support the RAWPT in deploying against identified taskings with the performance of each priority being monitored on a weekly basis.

### **Partnerships**

Suffolk Constabulary works in partnership with businesses and organisations representing rural communities to recognise and respond to the impact of crime in rural areas. It also collaborates with neighbouring forces and organisations such as the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) to tackle cross-border crime including human trafficking and modern slavery.

### **Operational Delivery**

The Rural & Wildlife Policing Strategy will be delivered through a series of actions for operational police officers and staff. The Strategic Lead for Rural & Wildlife Crime will attend the Victim Satisfaction and Confidence board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable (Local Policing), to be held to account for the delivery of the strategy. For further information on rural crime please visit Suffolk Constabulary's website at [www.suffolk.police.uk](http://www.suffolk.police.uk).

To make contact with the Rural and Wildlife Policing Team, please email [rwp@suffolk.police.uk](mailto:rwp@suffolk.police.uk), or send a general enquiry contact form from our website, found under Contact Us.



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