

# COMBATTING HARE COURSING

## THE CLA'S ACTION PLAN

Despite being illegal, instances of hare coursing are increasing, fuelled by black market gambling. As a result, farmers and landowners are frequently having to deal with the aftermath of hare coursing on their land.

This includes extensive criminal damage to land, crops and farm infrastructure as well as endangering the safety of those who try to intervene. All of these cost rural businesses time, effort and money to resolve.

The powers to prosecute those involved exist but stronger action is needed to deter the criminals who take part. The CLA has set out an action plan for farmers, landowners, the police and government to work together to bring those involved to justice.

**1 Introduce specific sentencing guidelines for hare coursing** – currently sentences for hare coursing are issued using guidelines which are not specifically linked to hare coursing. Guidelines specific to hare coursing would mean sentences being tailored to have maximum impact on hare coursers such as vehicle seizures and ensuring compensation is paid to the landowner as a priority for any damage caused.

**2 Providing resources** – the National Wildlife Crime Unit must have sufficient resources to be able to treat hare coursing as a priority and fulfil its mission statement to provide *“a centralised capacity for intelligence collection”*.

**3 Allow police to reclaim kennelling costs of dogs from offenders** – seizing the dogs involved is an effective way to prevent hare coursing. Ensuring the police can do so cost free would help increase seizures.

**4 Additional training for 101 call handlers so they better understand the crime** – ensuring those tasked with recording incidents fully understand the crime will help police prioritise investigations.

**5 Register convicted hare coursers and the dogs involved on the Police National Computer (PNC)** – ensuring police forces are aware of previous hare coursing activity will mean those convicted multiple times receive stronger punishments and dogs involved in hare coursing can be confiscated.

**6 Working together**

- Ensure landowners and the public know how to spot hare coursing and what to do if they see it taking place.
- Share best practice advice to landowners on how to reduce the chance of being a victim of hare coursing based on Design Out Crime Principles.

### WHAT IS HARE COURSING?

**Two dogs compete against each other in pursuit of a hare and bets are often placed on the outcome. The 2004 Hunting Act outlawed hare coursing but it now takes place illegally without the permission of the landowner.**

### KEY FACTS

Lincolnshire police deal with around

**200 INCIDENTS** per month (Reported Nov 2017)

**The Fir Cup**, an illegal hare coursing event, is reported to have prize money of **£6,000** and is organised secretly on WhatsApp (Thames Valley Police)



**Farmers and landowners who challenge hare coursers can face violence from those involved**

### LANDOWNER VIEWS

*“We live in fear of being targeted as we know how vicious the people that take part in hare coursing can be. We’ve got the scars to show for it.”*

**CLA East member**

*“Hare coursers cause thousands of pounds worth of damage to land and crops. This leads to losses within our business and we have no mechanism of recovery. More needs to be done to tackle this criminal form of vandalism.”* **Farmer, East Yorkshire**

### CONTACTS

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