

# Police and Crime Commissioner Manifesto 2021

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**Countryside  
Alliance**



The voice of the countryside

The countryside is a beautiful place in which to live and offers a lifestyle to which many aspire. However, crime has become an increasing issue for rural communities over the past few years, indeed second only to the National Health Service. It is not just the experience of crime but also the rising fear of crime that needs to be recognised.

However, while there is increasing awareness in Westminster of the problem, this is often not felt by the communities that live and work in the countryside or reflected in government policies. Forty seven per cent of people who responded to our 2020 Rural Crime Survey told us they don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 38 per cent said that they have had a crime committed against them in the past 12 months.

The crimes which were recorded as being most frequently committed in rural areas include fly-tipping, agricultural machinery theft, hare poaching and trespass (trespass is not in itself criminal unless aggravated), with respondents wanting the police to prioritise tackling these crimes.

Additionally, according to the survey, there is a serious problem of crime being underreported in rural areas, with one in four not reporting crimes they were a victim of. Those surveyed felt it was either a waste of time to report it or that the police would not be able to do anything. This is why 47 per cent of people don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 57 per cent of people don't think rural policing has improved since Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012.

The implication of these findings is that we have a rural population simply putting up with the crime they experience and making do as best they can. There is often no escape from the effects of rural crime, with the fear of crime doing just as much damage as the crimes that are committed.

Good rural policing is about far more than numbers of police officers on the ground. If we truly want to tackle rural crime, then we must form effective partnerships between the police, rural communities and other authorities to ensure that the needs of our rural communities are truly understood so that the availability of services matches those needs.

Crime is a key issue for rural communities and it is essential that Police and Crime Commissioners recognise that tackling crime and increasing police visibility is a priority for the rural electorate.



# The Countryside Alliance calls upon Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to:

## #1 Take rural crime seriously

47 per cent of people don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 57 per cent of people don't think rural policing has improved since Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012. These figures demonstrate why rural crime is not reported and there is a feeling amongst rural communities that the police cannot do anything about it. This is particularly pertinent when we are talking about rural specific crimes such as hare poaching, livestock worrying and agricultural machinery theft. PCCs have the opportunity to ensure that police not only understand rural communities but take action to reassure those who live and work in the countryside.

## #2 Support dedicated rural crime teams



A single point of contact in the community through rural crime teams adds confidence that reported crimes will be investigated with the full impact on the rural community understood. Many forces have already set up a dedicated team but PCCs must ensure the funding for them continues, and if there is no dedicated team then they must provide their full support and funding for one to be set up.

## #3 Secure fair funding for rural policing

Providing services across large, sparsely populated areas is becoming ever more challenging as resources come under increasing pressure. Analysis by the Rural Services Network suggests per-person direct funding in predominately urban forces was £206 on average in 2018/19 compared with £167 in their more rural counterparts. PCCs have to operate in a tough fiscal environment so they should work with other rural PCCs to ensure that any reassessment of the Government's funding formula takes proper account of delivering policing in more sparsely populated areas.

## #4 Ensure better use of intelligence



On-the-ground intelligence from groups such as Neighbourhood Watch and Farm Watch are essential, not only in crime detection but also crime prevention. We urge PCCs to invest in these valuable community resources and work with them to complement policing and crime prevention initiatives. Coupled with improved use of modern surveillance and IT technology this will ensure more effective working. Neighbouring forces must also share intelligence to combat cross-border crime. Making use of better intelligence and building on the resources within local communities will enable PCCs to deliver effective policing in rural areas.

## #5 Encourage people to report rural crime

Currently one in four rural crimes is not reported to the police. This is a serious problem and those surveyed by the Countryside Alliance felt it was either a waste of their time to report it or that the police would not be able to do anything. We must make it easier for people to report crimes and when they are reported, it must be taken seriously. Working with their force and local communities, PCCs can ensure the message of "reporting every crime" is understood by all communities and acted upon.

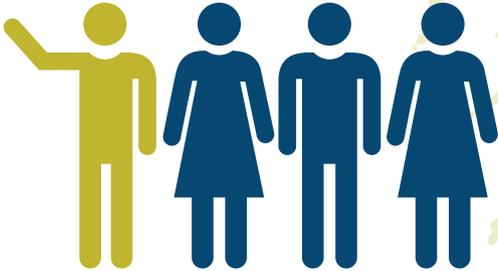
## #6 Target police resources better



Resources are routinely focused on areas that have the greatest 'threat, risk and harm'. This assessment is as applicable to rural communities as urban ones. Rural communities come in all shapes and sizes and their needs vary greatly from one area to the next. Particular challenges also exist in tackling crimes that are unique to rural areas, such as poaching, farm theft and livestock rustling. Other crimes, such as drug dealing, domestic abuse and burglary, often present greater challenges for policing when perpetrated in a rural context. Crime, crime prevention, community safety and support services in the countryside must be understood and viewed from a rural context. PCCs should get to know their communities, understand their needs, and match services and resources to them.

# Key facts:

Crime is hugely underreported in rural areas with



**1 in 4 people**

not reporting the last crime of which they were a victim

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey)

**57% of people**

don't think rural policing has improved since Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey)

**47% of people**

think that the police don't take rural crime seriously

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey)

**Livestock theft**

increased in 2019, with organised gangs taking large numbers of sheep, which are thought to be entering the food chain illegally (NFU Mutual)

Fly-tipping affects

**67%**  
of farmers

with the average cost to clean up an incident estimated at

**£800**

The average financial impact of crime on rural-specific business owners is

**£4,800**

(National Rural Crime Network)