

# Prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance – working to combat rural crime

→ **DAVE JONES** is chief constable of North Yorkshire Police and the national policing lead for Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs. He writes exclusively for Countryside Alliance members about how we can help bring rural crime down.



Those who live and visit our beautiful county of North Yorkshire do so because of its outstanding rural beauty. Whether it's tackling crime along our county's designated heritage coastline or on the rolling hills of North Yorkshire Moors and the Yorkshire Dales, it presents a unique policing challenge.

I was delighted to become the national lead on Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs with temporary assistant chief constable Amanda Oliver as my deputy, building on the existing work of Dyfed – Powys' police chief constable Simon Prince.

North Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner Julia Mulligan chairs The National Rural Crime Network. Their recent survey showed rural crime across the UK is vastly under reported, with more than one-in-four not reporting crime. The survey estimated the cost of rural crime to be £800 million a year. But it's not just the financial impact, it is the emotional impact to our communities. We must continue to build on the need for engagement when addressing rural concerns. We recognise that the rural communities are not reporting all crime that occurs, and the police must engage



**Dave Jones** is Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police and the national policing lead for wildlife and rural affairs. He is the National Police Chiefs' Council leader for citizens in policing, where he is helping to develop stronger links between communities and the police through volunteering. He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in the New Year Honours list.

further to break any barriers.

We have made great progress here in North Yorkshire in our core business of tackling rural crime, to involve and reassure our rural communities, and are addressing concerns on conservation. Under North Yorkshire's stewardship of the national Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs portfolio, we aim to develop on the existing working practices. With a strategic framework of Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement and Reassurance, the aim is to make our rural areas safer, and feel safer. There is also a focus on developing and strengthening our regional and national network of partners in order to share best practice.

## PREVENTION

Recently in North Yorkshire I introduced a dedicated team of specialised officers – the Rural Taskforce. This team, consisting of 18 police officers, police community support officers and civilians is spread out across our huge county and are patrolling remote areas of North Yorkshire, engaging with people and businesses to provide bespoke crime prevention advice. This taskforce is the biggest of its kind in the UK, and its members work closely with our large number of special constables and volunteers who are making a real difference to people living in our rural communities.

## INTELLIGENCE

The use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology (ANPR) and specialist resources, such as our Road Crime Team, make the 6000 miles of North Yorkshire's roads a hostile environment for the criminal fraternity to succeed. Exploiting the opportunities of ANPR as a national intelligence source is another tactic in the fight against those who

commit rural crime. The sheer volume of success in the use of this technology on a national level has resulted in continued investment by police in all areas of the UK.

## ENFORCEMENT

Operation Checkpoint is the largest rural policing operation of its kind in the country, and saw Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Lancashire, North Yorkshire and Northumbria join forces to target cross-border criminals. This sent a clear message to travelling criminals: "If you go into rural areas to commit crime, we will catch you." Targeted proactive patrols involving police and our volunteer watch schemes have proven very successful. North Yorkshire is one of the safest places in the country, and we are determined to keep it that way. Operations similar to this across the UK will continue until travelling criminals get the message that rural areas are far from a soft target, and if they do intend to go out and commit crime they will face a dedicated network intent on stopping them.

## REASSURANCE

Social media continues to be a fantastic tool in the fight against crime. The recent introduction of 'North Yorkshire Community Messaging' provides an effective way of getting information out to the community quickly. It's a free community messaging system that allows you to register to receive the initiatives aimed at tackling crime, notifications and community news happening in your local neighborhood, via text message, email or app. I urge all rural communities to engage through social media, not only as a method of bringing people together but also in the fight against crime.

In 2016 I attended my first national

Wildlife Crime Enforcers Conference. Police and partners shared learning and experiences. In the hugely beneficial networking exercise the dedication, expertise and passion of these individuals and groups was plain to see. Present were members of the Nation Wildlife Crime Unit [www.nwcu.police.uk](http://www.nwcu.police.uk). In particular, the head of that unit chief inspector Martin Simms recently revived a global law enforcement award in South Africa for 'leadership of one of the world's most outstanding police units dedicated to combating wildlife crime'. The conference reiterated the absolute necessity to continue to tackle wildlife crime in our countryside and at our borders in order to protect species.

Through prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance, my vision is that we will be more visible and available to our rural communities. Listening, engaging and addressing the issues that matter most. Giving rural policing the national priority it deserves. ●

The Countryside Alliance is proud to be a stakeholder in the National Rural Crime Network, the group that works with Government, the Police and other rural organisations to highlight the key problems of rural crime. Our Head of Policy, Sarah Lee, attends meetings of the network and is in regular contact with other stakeholders. The network's 2015 survey of over 17,000 people living and working in rural areas throughout England and Wales suggests the true cost of crime in rural areas could exceed £800m. This figure is 21 times higher than previous figures, dwarfing earlier estimates.

The survey also indicates that hard-pressed young families and farmers are the most frequent victims of crime, with the average cost of those crimes to a household being over £2,500 and for a business over £4,000.

Moreover, there appears to be a vicious circle of low expectations, leading to chronic under-reporting, anger, frustration and worry. The result is increasing fear of crime and significantly lower satisfaction levels in the police than the national average.

As a consequence of these findings, the Network made seven recommendations including fair funding for rural areas; more joined up working with partners and communities, building on rural resilience; embedding best practice; developing new policies and ways of working; and ensuring a more targeted approach within rural communities.

# Something not right? Call it in.



## The key survey results were:

- Financial impact of crime on rural economy is significant – the cost of crime to rural communities is estimated to be £800 million<sup>1</sup> equivalent to £200 for every household in the countryside. The average cost to rural households who are victims of crime is £2500 and £4100 for rural businesses.
- Fear of crime is increasing – 39% of rural people are very or fairly worried about becoming a victim of crime, compared to 19% nationally. Even more worryingly, 32% of respondents are more fearful of becoming victims of crime than five years ago, compared to only 3% who are less fearful. Rural businesses are the most fearful of becoming victims of crime, with 51% very or fairly fearful, closely followed by younger families.
- Low satisfaction rates of police performance in rural areas – just 39% of rural people rate the police as good (32.4%) or excellent (6.3%). Among rural businesses this figure was just 32%. Those figures compare to 63% nationally who think the police is doing a good job (53% Good and 10% Excellent), showing rural communities have a significantly lower satisfaction rate than their urban counterparts.
- The survey showed satisfaction levels drop to just 23% when it comes to the rural public's perceptions of the police's ability to solve crime.
- Crime is under reported in rural areas – more than one in four (27%) did not report the last crime of which they were a victim. This means Home Office figures of 294,000 rural crimes between April 2014 and May 2015 could be incorrect and the actual number of crimes could be as high as 403,000.
- Rural communities are resilient – community spirit is clear to see in our rural communities. The vast majority feel they very or fairly strongly belong in their community, with 27% feeling that sense of belonging has increased in the last five years. 25% of people also felt that their community pulled together to improve their neighbourhood
- Lessons for Local Authorities and other partners – two issues of greatest concern to the rural community were road safety (63%) – which the police play a crucial part in, but which they cannot resolve without working with partners – and fly-tipping, which is now a civil offence (61%).