

Police and Crime Commissioner Manifesto 2016



**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, the picture postcard image often hides crime and poverty, which can be on a par with urban areas. Crime has become an increasing concern in rural areas over the past few years. In many surveys, crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), law and order and policing are the most important issues for rural communities, second only to the National Health Service.

The extent of crime in rural areas is only part of the problem. For many people, whether they have fallen victim to crime or not, the simple fear of crime can have a detrimental effect on their quality of life. 39% of rural people are worried about becoming a victim of crime compared with 19% nationally. It has been suggested that anticipation of crime has the potential to cause greater harm than the actual experience of crime itself due to the effect of long-term stress and other mental health considerations. This is exacerbated by rural isolation. Rural communities are often without reliable mobile signal or internet, and an absence of any visible police presence.

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 ensure:

#1 Fair funding for rural policing



Providing services across large, sparsely populated areas can be expensive on a per capita basis and, as resources come under ever increasing pressure, this is becoming ever more challenging. PCCs must ensure that the Government's reassessment of the funding formula takes proper account of delivering policing in more sparsely populated areas.

#2 Better use of intelligence



On-the-ground intelligence from groups such as Neighbourhood Watch and Farm Watch is 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. Neighbouring forces must also share intelligence to combat cross-border crime. PCCs must ensure there is better use of intelligence and build on the resources within local communities to deliver effective policing in rural areas.

#3 Improved use of modern surveillance and IT technology to ensure more effective working



Police forces often rely on outdated, poor quality equipment that is rarely compatible with neighbouring forces. Modern policing needs to be in step with the latest technology and techniques, enabling police officers to tackle crime, share intelligence and work more efficiently by completing paper work and other administrative tasks on the go. This will cut costs and ensure that more money can be spent on frontline policing and not wasted on backroom support.

#4 Better targeting of police resources



Resources are routinely focussed on areas that have the greatest 'threat, risk and harm'. This assessment is as applicable to rural communities as urban ones. 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. PCCs must take rural policing into consideration when assessing police resources and drawing up their crime plans.

#5 Special Constables or "Parish Police Officers"



Policing in the UK is by consent, and good policing depends upon strong co-operation and engagement between the police and public. PCCs should commit to increasing the number of Special Constables in rural areas to support the regular force and consider the introduction of voluntary Parish Police Officers in the most remote areas. It is important that people feel that rural crime is being taken seriously. Increased visibility of police in rural areas through the use of Special Constables would give reassurance and should a problem arise there would be local support and, linked to the parish council, Parish Police Officers would ensure that local concerns are recognised and acted upon.



Key facts:

Crime is under reported in rural areas. More than



1 in 4 people

did not report the last crime of which they were a victim.

The cost of crime to rural communities is

£800 million

equivalent to

£200

for every household in the countryside.

Livestock crime

is on the increase across Wales, the Midlands, East of England and Northern Ireland.

39%

of rural people

are very or fairly worried about becoming a victim of crime compared with

19% nationally

The average cost to rural households who are victims of crime is

£2,500

and **£4,100** for rural businesses