



Cambridgeshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

To: Business Coordination Board

From: Chief Constable

Date: 14 July 2015

RURAL POLICING

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) on Rural Policing in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The report aims to outline the strategic management of rural crime, the context and challenges of dealing with rural crime and to outline the approaches that are currently being taken to tackle rural crime at an operational level.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to note this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Nationally rural crime-theft is estimated to have cost £44.5 million pounds in 2013, a figure that is believed by the National Farmers Union (NFU) to be rising at 5% per year. Within Cambridgeshire the NFU estimate the cost of rural theft to be £2.7 million, the highest in the country. It is important to note that accurate figures on the true cost of rural crime are nearly impossible to obtain. This is because:
 - Definitions of rural crime differ between constabularies (‘definitions’, below).
 - Rural crime is believed to be significantly under-reported.
 - The economic impact of rural crime – for example the effect of the theft of key pieces of agricultural plant during harvest - is difficult to estimate.
- 3.2 It is important to note that rural crime goes beyond mere theft and includes offences which impact on the quality of rural life and the fear of crime in isolated communities.

4. Definitions

4.1 There is no nationally accepted definition of rural crime. Within Cambridgeshire Constabulary (“the Constabulary”) the definition of rural crime is as follows:

4.2 *A crime or incident type which occurs in any geographical area ordinarily described as ‘rural’, and where the criminal activity is more prevalent in, or unique to, rural areas.*

The Constabulary recognise the following as constituting rural crime:

If the offence occurred at a: farm barn, farm shop, farm building, farm yard, farm house, farm field, fish farm.

Or the property involved is: agricultural machinery, agricultural tools, fencing, hay/straw, heating oil and red diesel, horses and or tack, horse boxes, livestock.

And the offence is: burglary, robbery, theft, criminal damage, offences of public health offences (fly tipping) and wildlife offences, hare coursing and poaching.

5. Police Responsibilities, Governance and Partnership Arrangements

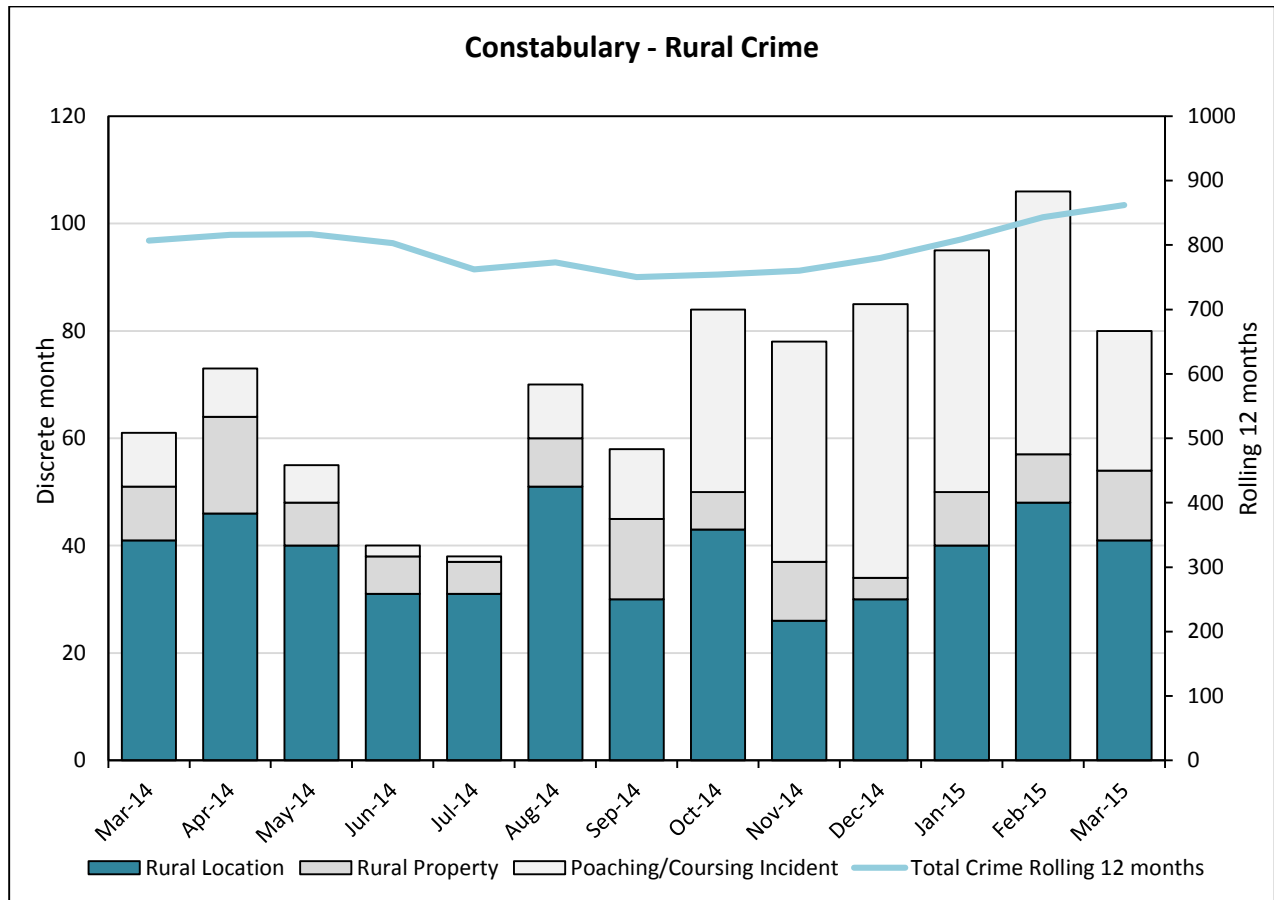
5.1 The police are the lead agency for tackling many aspects of rural crime however the variety of rural crime types necessitates a multi-agency response. The police are not the lead agency for some of the most prevalent rural crimes such as fly-tipping (Environmental Health/District Councils) stack fires (The Fire Service) and rural Anti-Social Behaviour (shared responsibility with local authorities).

5.2 The Constabulary holds a quarterly rural community action group bringing together representatives from all local policing commands, the NFU, Country Side Watch (CSW), Community Safety Partnerships, the Fire Service and District Councils. This group then reports into the Eastern Region Rural Crime Group. This group also meets quarterly and includes representation from constabularies across the East of England as well as the Fire Service, the Environment Agency, NFU and NFU Mutual, CSW, Farm Watch and the Countryside Landowners Association (CLA). The purpose of this group is to share best practice, information and intelligence, to identify trends and support cross-border working.

5.3 Cambridgeshire Constabulary has recently joined the National Rural Crime Network whose aims are to promote awareness of rural crime issues and to share research and best practice into ‘what works’.

6. Extent and Frequency of Rural Crime

6.1 The Constabulary's Corporate Performance Department provide updated information on rural crime rates on a quarterly basis. The most recent figures are represented below:



6.2 Rural crime figures do not include offences such as fly-tipping (not recorded by the police) or 'raves' as these fall outside of the formal definition. Separate research suggest that there were 45 reports of raves or 'attempted' raves in 2014. Some of these were prevented in the 'setting up stage' through early intervention by officers and some took place in urban settings (warehouse parties).

6.3 There is no published data on outcomes for rural crime specifically either locally or nationally. In the absence of this data the efficiency of police actions is best assessed through recorded crime and community confidence.

7. Operational Policing Initiatives, Training and Planned Work

7.1 The core response to rural crime still rests with the Constabulary's Rural Crime Action Team - part of the Criminal Investigation Bureau and capable of deploying force-wide and providing expert advice for all front line officers.

7.1 The Constabulary recognises that rural crime is far too wide-spread to be tackled solely by specialists. For this reason the Constabulary has embarked on the largest ever training programme for front line officers in rural crime. Over the last 12 months over

400 officers across the Constabulary have received rural crime training, normally taking place in farm-settings and delivered with the assistance of CSW and NFU.

- 7.2 Specific operations tackling seasonal aspects of rural crime have been run over the last year: Operation Dallas (heating oil theft), Operation Balboa (Christmas rural crime), Operation Cushman (protecting isolated rural post offices), Operation Armitage (arson and stack fires in collaboration with the Fire Service), Operation Oaklands (crime prevention in small rural communities).
- 7.3 Future planned initiatives include a Force-wide Rural Crime Action Day (RCAD) on the 25 November 2015. This will be a police lead and multi-agency day including enforcement actions, crime prevention, community engagement and front line officer awareness raising. The RCAD will involve front line officers, Joint Protective Services, the Special Constabulary and Police Cadets as well as an array of partner agencies. This will be followed up on the 26 November with a series of five 'Barn Meetings' – community engagement events run with the material support of local farmers, CSW and the NFU and located across the county.
- 7.4 A recent change in the law regarding the control of horses has created an opportunity to make a real and lasting change to fly-grazing of horses and stray horses. The Constabulary is leading on bringing local authorities together to discuss the impact of this new law and how to operationalise it in practice.
- 7.5 An operation is planned to tackle seasonal fuel theft over the harvest time and the targeting of high-value plant.
- 7.6 The Constabulary has recently appointed a new lead for heritage crime and there will be a renewed focus on this crime which disproportionately impacts rural communities.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The Board is recommended to note this report.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	NFU Mutual Rural Crime Survey 2014
Contact Officers	Chief Inspector James Sutherland, Area Commander South Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire Constabulary