

# Tackling Rural Crime Together - July 2015



As we head into the summer months, I'm aware that this is yet another busy time for many of our rural businesses – so I appreciate any time that you take to look through this rural update. With the different season and the improved weather brings additional challenges as crops are cut and the strawstacks are evident in the fields. As many of you will be aware from our alerts, last year we suffered a series of strawstack arsons in the area. We have been working closely with landowners and the Fire and Rescue Service to aim to prevent opportunities for this to happen again, and to respond effectively if it does. Any information of suspicious behaviour should be passed through to us on 999 or 101. Similarly with the harvesting of the crops, comes the threat of hare coursing and lamping. PS Hawkett has been working with colleagues in surrounding forces and over the Ridgeway to put together plans to tackle hare coursing as it happens and to patrol areas that may be considered vulnerable. I understand there is sometimes frustration in relation to the timing of police response, but we have had successes with arrests made (often people from outside the area), and again I would urge you to call us when you see anything that you think may relate to hare coursing – it remains a priority to us.

I recently had some feedback that when some West Berks residents ring 101 they get put through to Hampshire or Wiltshire. From personal experience, if you wait for the end of the recorded message, it will give you an opportunity to request an alternative force to the one you may be about to go through to. If you request Thames Valley at that point, you will go through to local call handlers. We have to get this right for you, and I have one more request – please do not call local officers on their mobiles and leave messages about crimes in progress or suspicious activity. They could be on leave or rest days and may not pick up the valuable intelligence you have passed on for several days. Please help us by using 101 or 999.

You will have a couple of opportunities to catch up with the Neighbourhood teams at the Police Open Day at Sulhamstead on 8<sup>th</sup> August, or at our stand at Newbury Show on 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> September. Alternatively, please come along to one of our Rural Action Groups which we have started this year. The dates will be shared on TV Alerts.

I know I always say it – but a genuine “Thank You” for your continued commitment and support to reducing rural crime and catching the offenders – it is impossible for any of us to deliver that alone.

**Deputy LPA Commander Lindsey Finch – West Berkshire Local Policing Area**

## Rural Crime Volunteer

We'd like to introduce you to our new Rural Crime Volunteer, Colin Evans, who helping Sgt Al Hawkett and PCSO Colin Reeves as part of the Rural Crime Team. Colin was with Lincolnshire Police as a front-line Enquiry Officer in Stamford Police Station for 23 years.

His duties covered just about every aspect of policing; from crime reporting and investigating and dealing with everyday problems from members of the public. He was a Race Relations and Diversity qualified instructor and taught this throughout Lincs Police; Colin was also instrumental in founding the Lincs Police Cadet Corps at Bourne, which he ran for 15 years. Prior to Lincs Police he was a linguist in the Royal Air Force and ended up as a German instructor at the RAF School of Languages.



Colin is an invaluable member of the team providing analytical support to identify trends allowing the police to direct their resources where most needed.

## Cesar System for ATVs

This is a reminder that Thames Valley Police have joined forces with the CESAR Scheme to offer farmers and land owners in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire the opportunity to have their Quad / ATVs protected with the **Compact CESAR System** at a heavily discounted price of **£75 plus VAT** (normal RRP is £120 plus VAT).



Please telephone the ordering hotline: 01784 778310 between 9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday - Friday (*Payments can be made by debit or credit card*)

NFU Mutual may offer discount on premiums if Compact CESAR is fitted to a vehicle insured on a tractor policy!



# Success in the Fight Against Rural Crime

Here is an update on some of the successes since the last newsletter.

In January, a 34 year-old male from Reading, two 33 year-old males from Tadley and Southampton and a 43 year-old male from Gwent, were all charged with offences committed under the Hunting Act. They were charged with daytime trespassing in pursuit of game after a gamekeeper spotted the men, with lurcher dogs, on his land in Bury Lane, West Ilsley. One of the men was also charged with driving without a licence and insurance and another male was also charged with being in possession of an offensive weapon in a public place. All males pleaded not-guilty when they appeared at Newbury Magistrates' Court on the 5<sup>th</sup> February and were given police bail.

In the early hours of the morning on the 17<sup>th</sup> January, a vehicle was stop-checked in Main Street, West Ilsley. On being stopped, one of the three men in the vehicle disclosed to officers that he had a knife and, after a search, other items were located in the vehicle. These included a hammer, lamping equipment and a catapult.

All three persons were arrested on suspicion of going equipped (having items on them that could be used to commit an offence) and one of them, a 25 year-old male from Chertsey, Surrey was also arrested on suspicion of having a bladed article in a public place for which he was charged the following day. He appeared at Newbury Magistrates' Court on the 12<sup>th</sup> February where he pleaded guilty to the knife offence and was fined a total of £205.

In September 2014 a 51 year old woman from Old Wantage Road, Eastbury, Hungerford, was charged with a total of 40 counts relating to an incident that took place in May 2014. A member of the public had phoned the police concerned about a strong smell of cannabis and dogs constantly barking at the property.

Upon arrival officers gained entry to a stable and discovered a number of dogs living in squalid conditions and requiring veterinary treatment. More

animals were found in a barn conversion next to the stable and cannabis plants and cultivating equipment were found.

The 51 year-old was sentenced at Reading Magistrates Court on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2015. She was found guilty in regard to the cultivation of drugs and received 400 hours of community service, forfeiture/destruction of all the drug paraphernalia, £520 in court fines and a £60 victim surcharge.

Following an investigation by Thames Valley Police and the Environment Agency, three men were fined for fishing without a license. Harold Henry, aged 59, Myles Connors, aged 28, and Michael Connors, aged 20, fished without licenses on the banks of a private fishing area at about 4.20pm on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 in Bath Road, Hungerford.



Police attended and seized the fishing equipment and all three men were re-

ported for summons. The case was handed to the Environment Agency and went to Reading Magistrates' Court on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. (photo [www.lochlomondangling.com](http://www.lochlomondangling.com))

Henry, from Westbourne Road, Easton, Bristol, pleaded guilty to both offences. He was fined £90 for fishing without a license and £60 for theft of fish. He was also required to pay £40 compensation to the Town & Manor of Hungerford, which owns the river, £127 costs and £20 victim's surcharge.

Myles and Michael Connors, both from Walton Street, Easton, Bristol, were found guilty in their absence. They were both fined £120 for fishing with no license and £90 for theft of fish. They were also required to pay £40 compensation to the Town & Manor of Hungerford, £127 costs and £20 victim's surcharge. An application for forfeiture was also granted for all the equipment and the fish.

A man was charged in connection with

attempted burglary and theft of a vehicle in Hungerford Newtown. The man, aged 31, of Torridge Road, Slough, was charged on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February with one count of attempted burglary, one count of attempted theft of motor vehicle and one count of theft of motor vehicle.

The charges related to an incident in a street off Wantage Road, Hungerford Newtown, on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February in which a resident of a property saw a person with a tool at their window; an incident in which a white Peugeot was stolen from outside a property on Wantage Road overnight, Saturday 14/15<sup>th</sup> February and an incident on the same night when the rear windscreen of a green Mitsubishi was smashed in Wantage Road.

He was due to appear at Reading Crown Court on the 9<sup>th</sup> March but failed to appear and is now wanted for these offences.

Two men were arrested on suspicion of burglary and arson following a break-in and a fire at a property in Stanford Dingley, near Newbury on the 10<sup>th</sup> May. At around 3am the fire service and Thames Valley Police were called to a report of a fire at a bungalow in Bucklebury Road, Stanford Dingley.

Three separate seats of the fire were discovered and so it was suspected that the fires had been started deliberately. The building was being renovated and so fortunately there was nobody in the bungalow at the time.

A 20-year-old man from Newbury and a 21-year-old man from Thatcham were arrested on suspicion of arson and burglary in connection with this incident. They were both given police bail.

Following an investigation by Thames Valley Police, three boys were arrested on suspicion of hare coursing in Ufton Nervet on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April. Two 13-year-old boys from Burghfield and one 13-year-old boy from Mortimer were released on police bail

**Debbie Morton— Neighbourhood Coordinator**

# New Initiatives/Approaches

West Berkshire Local Policing Area is always keen to implement new ideas in order to help combat rural crime. Here are some of the things that they have instigated or we are looking into:-

## Stop the Thief

In October 2014 a couple of members from the Neighbourhood Police Team visited Beaminster Police Station, Dorset, to talk to their neighbourhood officers about a rural crime scheme called Stop the Thief. The scheme allows landowners to loan security equipment free of charge, from a specially formed committee; to prevent them from becoming victims of crime. At the end of the agreed time they can either return the equipment or purchase it at a discounted price. It was agreed to implement the scheme in West Berkshire. So far a committee has been established to run the scheme and is currently looking at fundraising in order to purchase equipment.

Until the scheme is set up, West Berkshire Local Police Authority has a number of pieces of equipment that it has been loaning to repeat victims of crime with a number of successes. This has included installing an alarm on a farm in Curridge which has since disturbed offenders trying to gain access to the property. Another alarm was installed on business premises in Colthrop Lane, Thatcham, which was a repeat victim of theft of diesel from vehicles parked in the yard. The alarm was activated on the 11<sup>th</sup> May and police attended. Shortly afterwards a 22 year-old woman and 27-year-old man, both from Hampshire, were arrested on suspicion of burglary and theft.

## Raves

Whilst West Berkshire has not been subject to too many incidents of raves, Thames Valley Police is aware of the damage that is caused to the environment and disruption to the lives of the rural community when one does take place. West Berkshire police have therefore carried out proactive prevention work which has included; visiting previous rave sites and conducting surveys with the landowner to see what measures can



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be put in place, identifying possible rave organisers and issuing them with warning letters, and sending warning letters to the registered keepers of vehicles that were seen at a rave in the area. Since carrying out the proactive measures, so far this year there have been no raves reported in West Berkshire.

## Vulnerable Location Scheme

The Vulnerable Location Scheme (VLS), is designed to identify repeat victims and locations of crime in order to take proactive steps to prevent further offences being committed. The

scheme is run on a voluntary basis with the victim/landowner working together with the police and supporting agencies, and will involve measures such as target hardening after carrying out a review of security measures.

Around 40 locations have been put on the VLS since it started in October 2014. Results show that:

- No one has been a victim of crime whilst on the scheme and receiving four weeks of dedicated tasking from the police around their properties.
- 24 locations have had farm security surveys completed. After the four weeks of dedicated tasking, if the landowner becomes a victim again, additional help is offered. For example, discussions with West Berkshire Council about restricting access to by-ways is now taking place as one landowner became a victim again after the initial four week period.

## Theft of Horse Medication

More proactive work was carried out around the theft of horse medication, which historically has seen an increase in incidents around April/May time. Local stables, livery yards and racing stables were visited and offered crime prevention advice around



[www.louisvillehomepros.com](http://www.louisvillehomepros.com)

securing horse medication and general crime reduction advice.

## Rural Action Group (RAG)

The Neighbourhood Police Team is working hard to set up a Rural Action Group (RAG) for West Berkshire. This will be made up of police and partners including West Berkshire Council and local rural businesses and landowners. It will be a problem solving group to identify the current issues and actively work together to try and solve them. The first RAG meeting date was the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015.

## Royal Berkshire County Show- September

Thames Valley Police West Berkshire, along with officers from London Valley and South Oxfordshire, will be hosting a Stand at the Royal County of Berkshire Show during the weekend of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> September. We will be offering crime reduction advice to farmers and landowners as well as advice to all other visitors. Once again we will have the police vehicles for children (and dads) to have a play on; a wildlife crime exhibition and a number of competitions, so please come and say hello.



# Operation Festive and other Operation updates

Thames Valley Police carried out a rural crime operation, Operation Festive, in West Berkshire overnight on the 18/19th December. It involved officers from the local police area and included PCSO's and Special Constables. The operation covered the western area of West Berkshire including the Downlands, Lambourn, Inkpen and Yattendon

As in previous operations, 11 local residents acted as spotters using police radios to communicate with the police. This allowed them to report any suspicious activity immediately, in order for police units to swiftly respond.

During the operation numerous stop checks were conducted. One person was arrested on suspicion of possession of criminal property. A quantity of cash was seized from them which was then authorised by the courts to be retained under Proceeds of Crime Act.



West Berkshire Police ran two operations between February and April in response to an increase in rural crime, especially burglary of non-dwellings, poaching and theft.

Operation Fortitude ran from February 10th until end of April after a series of overnight non-dwelling shed and garage breaks in Chieveley & Hermitgae areas. This involved burglary of garages and outbuildings where items such as power tools, a generator, gardening tools and welding equipment were stolen.

During the operation, two people were arrested on suspicion of being in possession of an offensive weapon but there was insufficient evidence to charge. However, a number of people were stop-checked who had a history of burglary and vehicle crime and there were no further burglary of non-dwelling incidents in the area immediately after the operation.

Another Operation Festive was run during the evening of the 14th March

2015. Officers from the Neighbourhood Police team and around 10 spotters carried out the operation in the Downland and Thatcham rural areas. A number of suspicious incidents were called in by the spotters but were all found to be in order. One person stop-checked was found to have cannabis on them and received a caution.

A third Operation Festive was carried out in West Berkshire overnight between the 30th April and the 1st May. The operation; which ran between 6pm on Thursday 30th April and 2am on the 1st May; involved officers from the West Berkshire local policing teams and response officers and was carried out in the Hungerford, Kintbury, Lambourn, Chieveley, Hermitage and Bucklebury areas. Around 10 local gamekeepers and farmers acted as spotters.

During the evening a substantial number of stop-checks were completed on vehicles and persons which provided useful intelligence for the force. A Section 59 was issued for driving in a careless and/or inconsiderate manner.

West Berkshire Neighbourhood Police Team held three operations between January and April after complaints from local residents of damage caused to the environment by illegal off-roading in the Farnborough and Catmore areas.

The first operation was run on Sunday 25th January when local residents



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helped the police by acting as spotters. Four motocross bikers were stopped, warned and their details taken.

The second operation took place on Sunday 22nd February. Officers stopped four off-road vehicles driving on the Ridgeway, near Aldworth and West Ilsley and Catmore. All four were issued with Section 59 warnings.

The warnings mean that if the driver or

vehicle repeats the offence within 12 months the vehicle can be seized and, if not collected after paying for recovery and storage costs, could be crushed.

The Force would like to remind members of the public that the western third of The Ridgeway, from East Hendred Down, eastwards to Compton Down has restricted byway status. This means that the public does not have the right to take motor vehicles along it at any time.

A seasonal Traffic Regulation Order is in place on The Ridgeway between 1 October and 30 April every year, which means the area is closed to public motor vehicles to protect the surface of the ancient thoroughfare. The eastern third, known as Rectory Road, in Streatley is an unclassified road and is open to motor vehicles throughout the year.

The third operation took place on Sunday 19th April and we are pleased to report no illegal off-roaders were seen on this occasion.

Please can we remind you to continue to call in suspicious incidents to the 24-hour Police Enquiry Centre on 101 and make use of the text alert to look out for specific people and vehicles?

If you have any information about rural crime or see anything suspicious please contact the police via the 24-hour non-emergency Thames Valley Enquiry Centre on 101.

If you do not want to call 101, you can also pass on any intelligence or information that is **not urgent** to the following e-mail address that is monitored on a regular basis:- [ruralcrimespotterswb@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ruralcrimespotterswb@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)

If you don't want to speak directly to the police, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or online at [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

**Deputy LPA Commander Lindsey Finch**  
**West Berkshire Local Policing Area**

