

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

7th February 2020

Report from Devon and Cornwall Police

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE'S APPROACH TO RURAL CRIME

1. Purpose

This report and accompanying presentation provides an update the Police and Crime Panel on developments locally (and national context) in the response of Devon and Cornwall Police to rural crime.

2. Police and Crime Commissioner's Introduction

- 2.1 Crime affecting rural, often isolated communities is an area of concern for the Commissioner. In last year's survey rural crime conducted by the National Rural Crime Network found that 52% of Devon and Cornwall farmers and rural-specific business owners had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months, with 26 per cent saying they were fairly or very worried about becoming a victim in the future. And there's a perception that policing in local communities is poor, with only 27 per cent of respondents nationwide say their local police were doing a good job – 11 per cent lower than when the same question was asked in 2015. In Devon and Cornwall, the survey revealed that 26 per cent felt their local police were doing a good job.
- 2.2 At the Police and Crime Panel meeting in February 2019 the Commissioner in her PCC Update Report welcomed the appointment of two dedicated rural affairs officers for Devon and Cornwall. PC Martin Beck (Devon) and PC Chris Collins (Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) who would work in partnership to deliver effective problem solving and support neighbourhood officers and other staff.
- 2.3 The Commissioner advised that the new Rural Crime Team would focus on improving how the force receives, allocates and investigates reports of rural crime in order to support delivery of local activity in support of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Rural Affairs Strategy. The new officers would be supported by a Specialist Problem Solver and Field Intelligence Officer and would also work closely with the Force Wildlife Crime Officers and with the Rural Engagement Team led by the Special Constabulary.

- 2.4 The Panel have received further updates on the work of the team over 2019 and requested that an agenda item was scheduled to focus on this new area of activity with an opportunity to meet the team.

3. Background

- 3.1 During 2018 Devon and Cornwall Police were key stakeholders of the National Police Chief's Council Rural Affairs (NPCC RA) Strategy 2018 – 21¹, which highlighted that, *'the fear of crime as increasing and a low satisfaction rate of police performance in rural areas.'*
- 3.2 Concurrently, Project Genesis was conducting a review of the Forces Neighbourhood Policing Delivery to modernise the Neighbourhood Policing offering in line with the Policing Vision 2025 and Police & Crime Plan 2017-20. As a result of the NPCC Rural Affairs report, the Project recommended, (Recommendation 6.2), *"That the Force initially invests in 2 x PCs to act as Rural NBMs."* To deliver improved service and connectivity as part of a wider package of measures to improve policing in rural areas.
- 3.3 The investment in rural crime officers came thanks to the council tax precept increase in additional police officers.

4. Overview of National Strategy

- 4.1 To mitigate the concerns raised by communities the 2018 NPCC RA Strategy identified the strategic aims of:
- Safer rural communities.
 - Enhanced public engagement.
 - Increased public confidence in the police.
 - Empowered communities.
 - Strong partnership working.
 - Raised profile of rural affairs embedding an appropriate focus into policing culture.
- 4.2 It highlighted the following issues as its priorities:
- **Farm Machinery, Plant and Vehicle Theft (FMPV)**; including Quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles, modern and vintage tractors and tools & equipment from outbuildings.
 - **Livestock offences**; including livestock theft, worrying and attacks.
 - **Fuel theft**; including heating oil, theft and diesel.

¹ NPCC National Police Chief's Council Rural Affairs Strategy, Strengthening safe and prosperous communities 2018 – 2021. Produced by North Yorkshire Police, Northallerton, March 2018.

- **Equine crime**; including horse trailer and horse box theft, horse theft and tack theft.
- **Fly tipping**; Note this is for collaboration with stakeholders to tackle a public priority as members of the National Action Group.
- **Poaching**; Note cross over with Wildlife, this is specifically looking at the OCG aspect of this activity.

4.3 Whilst the Rural Strategy identified strategic aims and priorities it did not agree on a classification of what defined Rural Crime. This was critical for the creation of the new D&C Rural Crime Strategy to enable benchmarking and also, more importantly, to provide an accurate picture of rural crime to focus activity. Environmental scanning was conducted with other Forces to identify options for categorising rural crime, this identified a plethora of different definitions, a number of Forces defined Rural Crime as, 'Any crime which occurred in a rural area,' however this was recognised to be too broad to focus on the priorities identified in the RA Strategy.

5. Devon and Cornwall's Approach to Rural Crime

- 5.1 In October 2018 the 2 Rural NBMs were recruited, with one based in each County. The NBMs worked closely with the already established Special Constabulary Rural Engagement Teams (RET), seeking to enhance this network of officers operating within rural areas.
- 5.2 The Rural NBMs are line managed by the Neighbourhood Policing Development Sergeant, who is also responsible for overseeing the development and embedding of the modernising NHP guidelines (currently Project Genesis). This sits within the Prevention Dept. reporting to the Neighbourhood Policing Lead Inspector.
- 5.3 In April 2019 the Devon and Cornwall Rural Policing Strategy defined rural crime as the 'priorities' identified within the NPC RA Strategy (Para 3.2). This would ensure consistency with the National Strategy, providing simplicity and clarity, this proposal was ratified. (See Appendix A for Devon and Cornwall Rural Policing Strategy 2019 – 22, including Performance Management measures).

6. Key activity in 2019 for the Rural Policing Team

- 6.1 Strategic Partnerships - the team have established close relationships with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Countryside Landowners Association (CLA), along with other influential rural networks including; the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and Young Farmers. This has created a network to cascade messages, feedback on community views and also the opportunity to work in collaboration; using the influence of these recognised 'rural

brands' to gain community support and also to secure funding for campaign materials.

- 6.2 Rural Crime Initiatives – Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor; these initiatives are seen as key milestones as they form natural community safety partnerships where partners will work together to tackle community issues, this best practice is then rolled out force wide. Examples of the work undertaken include activity to improve Road Safety on Moorland and tackle; Illegal raves, Livestock worrying and fly-tipping.
- 6.3 Engagement – In conjunction with the OPCC the team undertook a calendar of 72 Engagement Events for 2019 including
- County Shows and OPCC rural crime surgeries at key rural locations i.e. Mole Valley Farmers – these provided public engagement opportunities with the community.
 - Social Media – The team operate two very active Twitter accounts which provide updates on engagement activity and also crime prevention advice.
 - The team are driving Farm Watch and Horse Watch, linked to Devon and Cornwall Community Watches Association, leading to a 135% increase in membership. These Watches use community alerts to cascade information and build a network to disseminate prevention messages.
 - In November 2019 the team organised a Devon & Cornwall Rural Policing seminar for 200 delegates. This was hosted by the Chief Constable and had a Q&A session with strategic partners, this was followed by inputs on crime prevention, engagement and domestic extremism.
- 6.4 Crime Prevention Campaigns – 'Cold caller campaign' to raise awareness and mitigate criminals who stake out farms to commit acquisitive crime, 'Stop This Trailer' which encouraged the stop checking of plant machinery at key times. Op Poacher highlighting and raising awareness about the impact of poaching on the integrity of the meat market.
- 6.5 Training & Education – In order to raise awareness, the team provide inputs, training and awareness sessions both internally and with partners. This has included input to the councillor advocates. They have provided inputs to the NHP Academies for all NBMs and PCSOs and will provide training to all new officers. They have also provided sessions for CMCU. As experts in their field they are also supporting the arenas of Hunting and Heritage crime.
- Analytical Development – The team interpret data in collaboration with partners to produce a seasonal matrix which highlights themes of crime types according to season, (e.g. deer poaching and raves)
 - 'Green Routes' which identify hotspots for the Special Constabulary Rural Engagement Team to patrol.

7. Future Developments

- 7.1 Investment in the Rural Policing Team, the Chief Constable has committed to expanding the team, with a 2020/21 commitment to increase the Rural NBMs from 2 to 4 in February 2020, with aspiration to further invest against the uplift. On top of maintaining the activity of 2019 the increase will enable the following growth;
- 7.2 Development of external Community Connectivity. Linked to the re-energising of the Devon and Cornwall Watches Association, (enabled through investment by the OPCC), which create a stable platform the team will seek to further develop community engagement through Farm Watch and Horse Watch, to increase two way communication and crime prevention.
- 7.3 Strengthening internal Basic Command Unit links, the uplift in the team will enable each BCU to have a nominated single point of contact, who will attend tactical tasking and coordination meetings, supporting a wider internal cultural change to highlight and represent rural community needs when police resources are allocated.
- 7.4 Increased Analytical Capacity – There is a requirement to improve the data quality to feed the tasking of the team against the National Intelligence Model.
- 7.5 The team have developed links with the Duchy and Bicton College and have agreement to foster greater links through mutual training, so that the team are engaged with the future of farming.
- 7.6 Coastal / Maritime – The Force has established Community Responders, Tri-Service Safety Officers and Fire Police Community Support Officers to support coastal communities. A scoping exercise has commenced to understand what service local policing teams currently provide around maritime to inform the expansion of the Commissioner's Bluelight Fund.

Author

Inspector Rob Bolt
Neighbourhood Policing Lead, Devon & Cornwall Police
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Sponsor

Paul Davies
Assistant Chief Constable
Local Policing and Connectivity