

# Rural Crime Newsletter

2021 Spring Edition

In our last newsletter I cited the challenges of the current pandemic, none of us could have foreseen how it would continue to manifest. We recognise it has had a disproportionate effect on rural communities, with some areas largely unaffected; whilst other businesses and pursuits have had to stop or close.

As a police force, our core business has continued however the way in which we interact has had to change. We had hoped to engage and listen to our community through drop-in sessions at livestock markets, shows and stalls, this however has not been possible. We therefore would encourage you to use the Twitter accounts and online reporting mechanisms to ensure we understand what is happening on the ground.

To make sure we maintain connections we have moved our partnership meetings virtually with the Rural Crime Initiatives and also with the strategic leads for NFU and CLA. It is imperative that we continue to understand what is happening in the community so that we can appropriately focus resources.

This issue looks at how the team are using our wider resources through the special constabulary and volunteers, to maximise our capability.

Please follow the team using our two Twitter pages:

@DCPoliceRural\_D (Devon)

@DCPoliceRural\_C (Cornwall)



**Inspector Rob Bolt**  
Neighbourhood Policing Lead



Devon & Cornwall Police

# Rural Crime Trends

We have worked hard to support our communities and neighbourhood policing teams across Devon & Cornwall to problem solve and prevent rural crime. We continue to monitor crime trends and have reported an increase in the theft of batteries, mostly from recycling centres, businesses and mobile traffic signals. After working with partners and local teams this trend has reduced. There continues to be isolated plant, machinery and quadbike thefts, albeit at a low number, this will remain a focus. Most concerning is an increase in incidents of livestock worrying.

Livestock worrying is a criminal offence and has a devastating impact on livestock, farmers, and in some circumstances the dog and its owner. Across the force area during 2020 there were 181 reported incidents of livestock worrying, an alarming increase on previous years.

We would urge everyone to demonstrate responsible dog ownership and to report all incidents of livestock worrying. If you witness an attack on livestock do not intervene, keep yourself safe and call 999. For all other livestock worrying incidents please email [101@dc.police.uk](mailto:101@dc.police.uk) or [report crime online](#).

We would also urge farmers, landowners and the public to remain vigilant to suspicious activity. Please ensure that the appropriate security is present on buildings, vehicles and machinery, promptly reporting crime and incidents to the police.

## Rural Affairs Team



**PC Martin Beck**  
Rural Crime  
Devon



**PC Chris Collins**  
Rural Crime  
Cornwall



**PC Kerry Whitting**  
Rural Crime  
Devon



**PC Jules Fry**  
Rural Crime  
Cornwall

**Bodmin moor:**

# Rural Crime Initiative

The Bodmin moor rural crime initiative has continued to work to highlight the issues affecting the unique features of Bodmin moor. The partnership met in December where we were grateful to receive a presentation from the CLA in relation to the effects of COVID on landowners. An area of concern is the increase in visitors to the countryside and the problems that this can bring. These issues are replicated on Bodmin moor where an increase in visitors has been reported causing some access issues for farmers and damage to heritage assets in particular by illegal off-road driving. This acts as a reminder that as well as being privately owned and managed, the landscape is used for agriculture and has numerous special features that are vulnerable to illegal and irresponsible activity.

Current initiatives and future priorities were discussed, and it was agreed that livestock worrying, illegal off roading and livestock road safety would continue to be the focus of activity. The forum was updated on recent events including partnership working with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS), Devon and Cornwall police drone team, landowners and rural affairs officers. Drone surveys were undertaken of areas vulnerable to wildfires as part of a wildfire prevention campaign led by CFRS.

Animal welfare has also been a focus working with APHA to successfully manage some pony welfare concerns on the moor. Over the next few months, we will be continuing to work with partners and landowners with a livestock worrying campaign.





**Dartmoor:**

# Rural Crime Initiative



The effects of the pandemic have meant more people venturing onto the Moor to seek exercise and tranquillity. Local officers and the Specials Rural Engagement Team have been supporting the Park Authority tackle to unwanted behaviour of some of the park's visitors. There have been increases in littering, nuisance behaviour towards landowners, damage to protected features of the Park and at times hostility towards Park Rangers.



The Rural Affairs Team continue to support the priorities set up by the Rural Crime initiative on Dartmoor. The number of raves within the park has decreased during the pandemic but at key risk periods patrols have been targeted towards susceptible locations by the Specials Rural Engagement Team working alongside the Ranger team.



The number of livestock road casualties continues to be a concern with the pandemic having little effect on the casualty numbers for 2020. Further enforcement will take place using a variety of methods within the crime initiative partnership. A local message we should all be passing on is;

**Show Moor Care - slow down on Dartmoor – especially at night or when visibility is low.**

The Rural Team will be looking at how the Rural Engagement Team can extend the support it gives to the Rangers and Local policing in 2021 and will be continuing to work working closely with the Park Authority and partners to make the Moor as even safer place.

Exmoor:

# Rural Crime Initiative

As we have seen in other moorland areas within the force, Exmoor has experienced an increase in visitors due to the impacts of the various Covid19 restrictions. Since Christmas, Park Rangers have reported several issues around the park area. There have been isolated areas of littering and also some removal of park signage along with incidents of overnight camping.

One particular issue reported within the park, across both Devon and Somerset, is the ongoing problem of off-roading. This has involved groups of up to twelve riders/drivers and appears to take place largely over the weekends. Damage has been noted in the SSSI areas of both Ilkerton Ridge and Brendon Common. The wider issue is that often, the offenders are rude and inconsiderate to residents and other park users such as horse riders and walkers and livestock are caused distress.

Local Beat Teams are working with the communities and the Park Rangers to identify offenders and deal with this anti-social behaviour.

We are mindful that as we move towards spring there is still the likelihood of more extreme weather including heavy snow. This would likely result in an influx of visitors onto certain key areas of the moor causing pressure on those points, risks to road users and potential covid breaches.

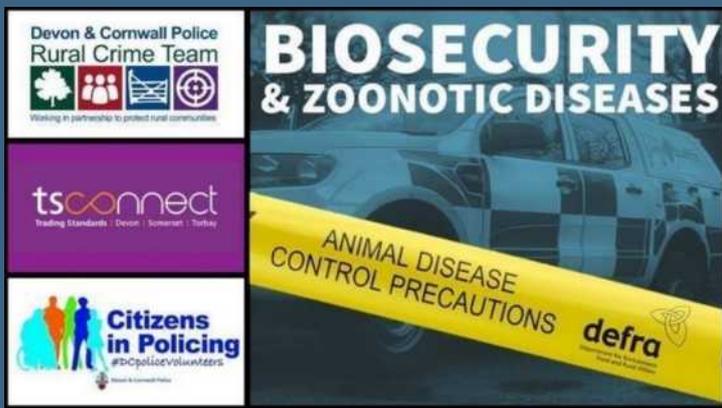
Moving forward through the year, the Rural Affairs Team, along with our supporting Rural Engagement Team will be looking to continue working with our partners within the initiative, local beat teams and the moorland communities to ensure the park remains protected but enjoyed appropriately by its visitors.



Damage caused by off-roading at Ilkerton Ridge (above) and Brendon Common (below).



**EXMOOR**  
NATIONAL PARK



### Volunteers and The Rural Engagement Team

The Rural Affairs Team are very fortunate to have several volunteers who support delivery of the force’s response to rural crime. Pooled from the police special constabulary there are dedicated Special Constables who help tackle rural crime and they are known as the Specials Rural Engagement Team. These officers have volunteered to dedicate their time and knowledge to rural crime issues. Each month they meet as a team to develop their specialist knowledge, which is provided by Rural Affairs Officers and partners on a variety of rural subjects. These include enhanced awareness on issues such as poaching, livestock worrying, victim support, farm biosecurity, equine crime through to rural crime prevention to name a few.

This enhanced knowledge is used to support patrols in areas where risks of rural crime may be increasing – these patrols are known as Green Route Patrols. The heart of the patrol is to engage with the community and offer prevention advice and a reassuring presence. They support many operations throughout the year and have been involved in operations such as anti-poaching patrols, high visibility moorland patrols and farm prevention advice visits. They are a key part of the Rural Crime Initiatives on our Moors and offer support to the Rural Affairs Team at rural engagement events such as rural surgeries, rural shows and at livestock markets.

The Rural Affairs Team are well supported by a growing number of volunteers from Citizens in Policing. Our rural volunteers have come from various back grounds with specific rural knowledge and talent, which enables them to support various activities and projects driven by the Rural Affairs Team and the Rural Engagement Team. Activities include, IT skills to drive engagement, connectivity and data analysis, support with rural knowledge and awareness from their expertise in their given backgrounds and support at engagement events. They are the unsung heroes in our communities working together to improve rural life.

Rural Affairs and Heritage Crime Toolkits



### Upskilling Devon and Cornwall’s Officers

Whilst rural shows and public meetings have taken a backseat in recent months it has allowed the Rural Affairs Team to develop and improve some of its internal functions. Our key aims being around in-force awareness training and building best practice.

We have provided our police colleagues with online information toolkits to better support them with preliminary contact with the public, rural crime investigations and problem solving. This will be an ongoing commitment to bring information to officers so they can confidently improve our service to the public. Closely linked to this, we have given internal awareness sessions, starting with the police Investigation and Resolution Centres with more departments to follow. Already the Rural Affairs Officers have seen an uplift in the enquiries and questions brought to their attention by their colleagues from various police departments and an increase in the support they are giving to local police teams during crime investigations and during search warrants/arrests. This a constructive indicator that the rural crime strategy is embedding in the service and the transformation of the way the police deal with rural crime has begun.

# Covid 19: Its Impacts on our Rural Communities & Farming

The Novel Coronavirus (Covid19) was declared a pandemic by The World Health Organisation on 11th March 2020. Since then, it has affected most aspects of our lives in some way or another. But how has this pandemic impacted upon the farming industry and our rural communities? Recent significant farming events include the prolonged Brexit process and issues surrounding the unpredictable British weather. Add to this a global pandemic and there are a lot of factors to contend with.

Lockdown measures have had a direct impact on farming and the wider rural community. Consumer habits have changed causing variations in demand. Farming businesses which have diversified into tourism and entertainment enterprises such as holiday lets, camping, farm parks etc. have also been affected. These factors have caused great uncertainty and could, in the long term, lead to potential financial hardship. Like all sectors, the farming workforce has been affected by a rising rate of Covid19 infections. There is the possibility of staff shortages within highly labour-intensive processes which could lead to wasted products/goods and a potential for animal welfare issues.

The very nature of farms being in rural locations means many farming families may feel isolated. Key events within the farming week such as cattle markets/auctions and farmers markets have largely been cancelled due to covid along with annual agricultural fairs and shows. For some, these events were one of the main ways they stayed connected with other members of the local farming community.

Another major impact of Covid19 has been the increased pressure on the countryside. This is due to more people taking up their daily outdoor exercise locally. There have been various issues across moorlands, coastal areas, and public rights of way. Frustration has been caused where visitors have strayed off paths and across private land causing damage. We have seen an increase in reported livestock worrying. This is largely down to a growth in dog ownership and a potential lack of knowledge regarding how to behave in the countryside.

CLA President Mark Bridgeman said: "The countryside is a welcoming place which has invaluable benefits for people's mental and

*One of  
the many  
shows  
cancelled  
during  
2020*



physical wellbeing, especially during the current pandemic, and we want everyone to be able to make the most of these while staying safe".

These issues have been recognised by Natural England and during Easter 2021 the Countryside Code will be re-launched nationally having undergone consultation and review with partner agencies such as the NFU. The Rural Affairs Team will be doing some work around promoting this message as we move forward into the Spring. It is hoped that this work will reach the wider audience and reduce some of the negative impacts seen.

## Do you need help or support?

Two charitable bodies which can offer help and support are:

### The Farm Community Network

helpline: 0300 0111 999

<https://fcn.org.uk/>

### RABI

helpline: 0808 2819 490

<https://rabi.org.uk/>

**Let's Talk Loneliness** is a government-initiated scheme which is committed to tackling the stigma of loneliness and promoting the importance of social connections.

<https://letstalkloneliness.co.uk/>

### The Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board

has a website with lots of information and advice for those in the farming industry, including a help page with signposting to specific farming support groups.

<https://ahdb.org.uk/coronavirus>

If you are struggling financially, you can find out about various support schemes and initiatives that are available via the NFU here:

<https://www.nfuonline.com/news/latest-news/what-business-support-grants-are-available-due-to-covid-19/>

## Focus:

# Heritage Crime

Heritage crime is any offence involving damage or loss to the historic environment and cultural property, which may include buildings, monuments and landscapes that reflect our history or objects of artistic, historical, archaeological and scientific interest. The counties of Devon and Cornwall possess a significant number of heritage assets of all types and as such heritage crime continues to be an area of focus. Officers on the Rural Affairs Team have been busy strengthening links with partner organisations including English Heritage, the National Trust and Historic England and clear networks are now in place which will help facilitate more effective reporting and investigation of heritage offences.



*Okehampton Castle, Devon (Grade 1 Listed Building & Scheduled Monument), in the care of English Heritage. – Image courtesy of English Heritage*



Highlights of activity over recent months include producing internal guidance to assist officers investigating these crimes, whilst externally the Rural Affairs team recently intervened to stop a planned event that would have caused significant damage to an important scheduled ancient monument in the Bodmin Moor area. Scheduled Monuments are fully protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and it is an offence to cause damage to them.

*Graffiti on control tower, former RAF Davidstowe Moor (WW2 RAF station, 1942 – 1954)*

The Rural Affairs team were also recently approached for advice and guidance by the team caring for one of our flagship heritage sites after it was subjected to repeat anti-social behaviour and damage. Following a comprehensive crime prevention survey, a report was prepared with the Police Crime Prevention team and a full set of recommendations produced. These recommendations will also have an application across other heritage sites in the region facing similar problems. Heritage crime is a new and expanding area of work for the team and there is much more planned over the coming months in recognition of the considerable frequency and diversity of heritage assets in our force area.



*Wheal Prosper, Grade II listed engine house, Rinsey Cove.*



## Cyber Crime

Cyber-crime continues to increase nationally and its effects on the rural community can be devastating to both businesses and individuals. Rebecca Davidson, Rural Affairs Specialist at NFU Mutual said:

*“More and more farmers are adopting technology to increase productivity, protect the environment and make their jobs safer. These changes drive efficiencies, but also come with cyber security risks.”*

The Rural Affairs Team this year will be working with our Cyber Protect Unit to provide free training and awareness sessions to groups across our rural communities to help you to protect against online crime. Let one of the team know if this is of interest to you.



If you have received a suspicious email, which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the National Cyber Security Centre's suspicious email reporting service: [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk) If you have been a victim of Cyber-crime or Fraud, then report it to Action Fraud: [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) You can follow the Cyber Protect Unit for the latest news and advice on Twitter: @DC\_CyberProtect



During lockdown the Cyber Protect Unit have been advising people to be on the lookout for Phishing scams. Phishing is when attackers attempt to trick users into doing 'the wrong thing' usually via email, such as clicking a bad link that will download malware (Malicious Software), or direct you to a fake website, offering deals that are often too good to be true or simply tricking you in to providing your passwords or banking details.



**Cyber Aware**  National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Aware is the government's advice on how to stay secure online.

### 6 ways to improve your online security

Due to coronavirus, people are spending more time online this year.

This means more opportunities for hackers to carry out cyber attacks. They often do this by targeting people and businesses using:

- email and website scams
- malware - software that can damage your device or let a hacker in.

If hackers get into your device or accounts, they could access your money, your personal information, or information about your business.

You can improve your cyber security by taking six actions:

1. Use a strong and separate password for your email
2. Create strong passwords using 3 random words
3. Save your passwords in your browser
4. Turn on two-factor authentication (2FA)
5. Update your devices
6. Back up your data

As seen on national TV 



**Cyber security for farmers:**  
Practical tips on how to stay safe

National Cyber Security Centre

NFU



The NFU and National Cyber Security Centre have published an excellent guide for farmers: [https://www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/business/crime/ncsc\\_nfu-cyber-security-guide-for-farmers/](https://www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/business/crime/ncsc_nfu-cyber-security-guide-for-farmers/)

# Contact Us

With the current restrictions in place, Devon & Cornwall Police are seeing an increased demand with reports and concerns around Covid 19 breaches.

The force offers many ways for people to contact them in a non-emergency should they need help.

To make sure communities receive the best service please follow these simple steps when contacting the police:

**1. Are you wanting to report a breach of Covid 19 restrictions?**

If you are reporting a breach of restrictions, then you can do this using the national reporting form on the Police.uk website - [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)

**2. AskNED – the non-emergency directory**

Need to ask a question but not sure who to ask for help, then AskNED - [dc.police.uk/AskNED](http://dc.police.uk/AskNED)

**3. Go online – [dc.police.uk](http://dc.police.uk)**

On the website you can find the answers to many of the questions people ask when calling the police plus lots of helpful information and advice.

**4. Report Crime Online**

If you need to report a crime or tell the police something, then why not report online using WebChat or the Crime Reporting Form. Alternatively, you can email [101@dc.police.uk](mailto:101@dc.police.uk)

**5. Call - 101 Non-emergency number**

## How to contact the police

If you need to contact us, and it's not an emergency then follow these simple steps to make sure you get the help you need:

- 1 Want to report a breach of COVID 19 restrictions?**  
You can report a breach of restrictions via the national reporting form - [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)
- 2 AskNED - the non-emergency directory**  
Need to ask a question but not sure who to ask for help, then AskNED - [dc.police.uk/AskNED](http://dc.police.uk/AskNED)
- 3 Go online – [dc.police.uk](http://dc.police.uk)**  
On our website you can find the answers to many of the questions people ask when calling the police, plus helpful information and advice.
- 4 Report Crime Online**  
If you need to report a crime or tell us something, then why not report using WebChat or the online Crime Reporting Form. Alternatively, you can email [101@dc.police.uk](mailto:101@dc.police.uk)
- 5 Call - 101 non-emergency number**

Remember in an emergency, always call 999

 Devon & Cornwall Police

## Remember in an emergency, always call 999

A poster has been created to help people understand the different ways to contact the police – please feel free to share this with your friends, family and colleagues, or print the poster and display in your community. To download the poster please visit our [website](#).

If you are wanting specific advice on current restrictions, please visit the [FAQs section](#) on the police website which provides all the latest information and advice.