



# POACHING PRIORITY DELIVERY GROUP NEWSLETTER



## **What is the Poaching Priority Delivery Group?**

Poaching is one of the UK's six wildlife crime priorities. Each priority is taken forward by a priority delivery group.

The England and Wales Poaching Priority Delivery Group is chaired by Glynn Evans of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and comprises representatives from the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Crown Prosecution Service, The Angling Trust, British Deer Society (BDS), Countryside Alliance (CA), Country Land and Business Association Ltd (CLA), Deer Initiative (DI), Environment Agency (EA), Food Standards Agency (FSA), NGO, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and National Farmers Union (NFU). Our work is driven by our objective:-

*To increase the level of awareness of poaching and hare coursing as serious wildlife crimes and build better trust and relationships between the law enforcement agencies and local communities, both leading to increased prevention activity, intelligence flows and enforcement success (England & Wales).*

## **Project Poacher goes from strength to strength**

Following on from earlier successes, Project Trespass was relaunched as Project Poacher at the 2015 UK Wildlife Crime Enforcers' Conference.

Project Poacher is made up of two key elements; advice and support for law enforcers and a free, easy to use app for reporting poaching incidents. Part of the support for law enforcers is a series of posters which police forces can use for their own anti-poaching publicity campaigns. You can download the posters here:

[www.nwcu.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Poaching-Poster.pdf](http://www.nwcu.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Poaching-Poster.pdf)

In just over a year following its launch at the National Wildlife Enforcers Conference, the app has been downloaded over 6,000 times and over 100 reports have been made. The app also contains information on poaching offences and gives a step-by-step guide to producing a crime report for the police. It uses your phone's GPS system to pinpoint locations. Once compiled, the report can be forwarded to the police. The app is available to download on Android, Apple and Windows devices from [www.projectpoacher.com](http://www.projectpoacher.com) A number of police forces have also included the app on their PDAs.

The initiative has seen public meetings held across the country involving partner agencies involved with the group, local police and members of the public living and working in the countryside. Magazine articles have been written to raise understanding and encourage the reporting of poaching incidents and police forces have taken direct action running anti-poaching operations, gathering intelligence and targeting offenders.

## **Angling Live Alerts**

A cutting-edge initiative to help tackle fisheries-related crime has been launched by the Angling Trust in partnership with the Environment Agency.

'Angling Alert' is a web-based communication tool that will instantly provide anglers and the wider public with information on fisheries crime – by text or email.

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Funded by rod licence income, Angling Alert signals a major step forward in crime prevention as, for the first time, the Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service, the Environment Agency, police, National Wildlife Crime Unit and other partners can share relevant information with the public in one place.

Angling Alert is a free service, to sign up go to <https://www.anglingtrustalert.co.uk/>

### **BASC Supports North Yorkshire Police in the fight against poaching**

As part of North Yorkshire Police's ongoing work tackling rural and wildlife crime, every police car will be equipped with a copy of BASC's poaching handbook.

More than 600 books were given away to police forces and UK-wide agencies, this brings the total number of handbooks given out free to over 14,000 in the last three years.

The booklet provides essential information and advice for law enforcers, gamekeepers, farmers and others affected by poaching and aims to increase awareness of poaching and associated crimes and to help action to be taken to stop them.

The booklet can be downloaded from the gamekeeping section of the BASC website [www.basc.org.uk](http://www.basc.org.uk). It is also available as a pocket-sized booklet to BASC members and law enforcers. Copies can be obtained by contacting the BASC game and deer department on 01244 573019 or [game.deer@basc.org.uk](mailto:game.deer@basc.org.uk).

### **Success on Exmoor: Operation Costa**

Exmoor National Park is a beautiful, wild and rugged place with a large number of deer inhabiting the countryside. Policing the area isn't always easy as the park is policed by two forces and has six local authorities managing it on a daily basis.

In 2013, poaching was highlighted as a major concern across Exmoor by the community and the police. Recognising this issue and aware that poaching is a national wildlife crime priority, Sergeant Whysall, of Avon and Somerset Constabulary and PC Beck, from Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, formed the Exmoor Rural Crime Initiative involving Exmoor National Park, Forestry Commission, Crown Estate, National Trust and River Exe bailiffs to help combat the problem by raising awareness and carrying out joint patrols.

Public meetings to discuss poaching were held across Exmoor, where the police, deer management, BASC and a local vet talked to groups of 100 people about the effects of poaching on the local community and how the animals suffered if the wrong calibre weapon was used.



Dave Jones (left), Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police and national lead for rural and wildlife crime, with Glynn Evans

These meetings were followed by local press releases and the officers appearing on regional news programs.

At the same time, the South West illegal meat forum was set up to target all types of poached food and stolen livestock being supplied illegally to commercial premises such as hotels and butchers. A 'Stop Poaching' poster was launched in conjunction with Crimestoppers. The forum now covers five police forces and is attended by the Food Standards Agency, Food Crime Unit, Environmental Health, Trading Standards and many deer initiative groups as well as the Angling Trust.

This resulted in a huge increase in intelligence and, with the help of the National Wildlife Crime Unit, a group of people were identified as being the main suspects in the area along with a butchers shop in Barnstaple.

Working closely with Devon and Somerset Trading Standards, warrants were obtained and a planned operation was set up. In January 2016, Operation Costa took place. The operation involved 50 officers from three police forces, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Trading Standards and other agencies simultaneously visited nine addresses in the Barnstaple area. Five people were arrested on the day, numerous shotguns and firearms were seized. One person has subsequently appeared in Crown Court for firearms offences.

Without this joined up approach and co-operation between all agencies involved, the hard work of the officers and Maria Endean from Trading Standards, this operation wouldn't have taken place.

At the 2016 National Wildlife Crime Conference, Operation Costa was awarded the runners-up award for National Wildlife Crime Operation of the Year, a fitting end to many years of hard work and planning.

Moving forward, other agencies are still working to provide collaborative enforcement with some of those involved to make sure that best practice including compliance testing is adhered to in the future. Joint patrols will continue to take place across Exmoor. The future message to the public and business owners is to demand to know that the meat you buy is from a safe and reputable source.

### **Miserable Christmas for criminals as Taskforce leads festive fightback against rural crime**

More than 30 people were charged to court and reported for summons by North Yorkshire Police's Rural Taskforce in December, capping a successful first year for the team.

Offences dealt with by the team include farm burglary, hare coursing, anti-social use of vehicles causing crop damage, drugs possession and drink driving – all of which will now be put before the courts.

The Taskforce's extremely busy December has meant that the team has now arrested more than 70 people, and seized more than 30 vehicles suspected of involvement in crime, since operational activity began in April 2016.

Among the incidents the Rural Taskforce have dealt with that have resulted in charges, summons or other disposals this month are:

- A 33-year-old Rotherham man has been reported for summons for a farm burglary in Hawes, driving whilst disqualified and driving with no insurance.
- Five men from Darlington and Cleveland reported for summons for hare coursing near Middleton Tyas.
- Two men from Middlesbrough reported for summons for hare coursing and poaching near Richmond.
- A 32-year-old man from Durham has been reported for summons for criminal damage, damaging crops with a vehicle near Topcliffe.
- A 23-year-old Stokesley man has been reported for summons for possession of cannabis.
- A man has paid £300 as part of a Community Resolution Disposal after causing damage to crops with a vehicle near Yarm.

Sergeant Kevin Kelly, of the Rural Taskforce, said: “It’s important to show our rural communities the work we are doing and the results we are getting. The team has worked tirelessly this month to target criminals who offend in our rural communities – the very communities we are here to protect.

“Being a victim of a crime could ruin someone’s Christmas – but so could being arrested, charged or reported. And we won’t stop at North Yorkshire’s borders. As our work this month shows, we will go anywhere to hunt down rural criminals, and give them their day in court.”

North Yorkshire Police’s Rural Taskforce works proactively alongside colleagues, partners and volunteers to increase engagement with rural communities, target criminals who offend in our rural areas, and provide bespoke crime prevention advice to those at risk of criminality. You can meet members of the Taskforce at community events throughout the year, including markets, auctions and shows. You can also follow the team’s work on Twitter at @NYPRuralTF or via the North Yorkshire Police Rural Task Force Facebook page.

The team has also launched a campaign to encourage people to act as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the police, asking residents to note down and report any suspicious activity, particularly in remote or isolated areas, as part of the ‘Call it in’ campaign.

Inspector Jon Grainge, of the Rural Taskforce, said: “Local residents are the best people to recognise when something is not quite right – and if that’s the case, we’d like to hear about it. Please report anything suspicious to the police using the 101 phone number. Even if it doesn’t need an immediate response, every piece of information helps us build up a picture and could prove vital in bringing criminals to justice.”

## **Vehicle seized during Environment Agency investigation is crushed after court orders its destruction.**

A car used by poachers has been crushed after a court ordered that it be destroyed. The Ford was crushed at a Gateshead scrap yard which specialises in destroying end of life and seized vehicles.

It had been seized by Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers after it was used for poaching in Northumberland.

### **Targeted patrols**

It happened in July 2015, when an Environment Agency enforcement officer carrying out targeted covert patrols saw three men in the Hags Bank area of Wylam just before midnight. The men were seen to set two nets, before returning at 4am the following morning, when they hauled the nets, which had migratory fish – salmon and sea trout – caught in them. At 4.20am the men were stopped at the request of the Environment Agency by police at Wylam Wood Road and arrested.

During sentencing earlier this year at Newcastle Magistrates' Court, they were fined £80, ordered to pay costs of £100 and a victim surcharge of £20. The court also ordered the forfeiture and destruction of the fishing equipment used in the incident, as well as the vehicle.



### **Poaching 'just not worth it'**

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Enforcement Technical Officer for the Environment Agency, oversaw the destruction of the vehicle last week. He said: Poaching is just not worth it. Not only may it result in a fine and criminal record, but also the destruction of property used in the offence.

We will not tolerate illegal fishing of any kind – it undermines legitimate anglers and jeopardises the future of the sport. We work closely with our partners at angling clubs and the police to target those people suspected of being involved in offences.

The past 20 years has seen dramatic improvements in water quality and the Environment Agency works hard to protect and develop fisheries, supporting law abiding anglers and helping protect the environment and boost the local economy.

## **Hare coursing vehicle crushed**

A vehicle used by hare coursers has been crushed as part of our ongoing Operation Galileo activity to tackle the illegal bloodsport.

The Honda CR-V was seized from the Deeping St James area in September 2016. ACC Paul Gibson was joined by Police and Crime Commissioner, Marc Jones, and his deputy, Stuart Tweedale, to watch the crushing on Thursday 23rd February.

ACC Paul Gibson said: “The crushing of this vehicle is a visual representation of the steps we are prepared to take to tackle hare coursing. We fully recognise the impact hare coursing has on rural communities and the fear and concern it causes. Wherever we can, we prosecute offenders and employ other deterrents such as seizing vehicles and confiscating dogs and we are committed to supporting farmers and protecting the countryside from those who come to Lincolnshire to commit these offences”.

*Video: <https://youtu.be/wakHRFRTC8o>*

## **Men sentenced following poaching incident in Dorset**

One man has been convicted of affray and two men fined following a poaching incident in Dorset.

Mark Mabey, 52 was sentenced at Bournemouth Crown Court on Thursday 5 January 2017 after being found guilty of affray. He also pleaded guilty to night poaching.

He was handed a 10-month prison sentence suspended for two years, a 20-day rehabilitation order, 80 hours of unpaid work and a one-year exclusion from the estate where he committed the offences.

Lewis Longstaffe, 22 and Edward Turner, 51 pleaded guilty at Bournemouth Magistrates' Court on 12 December 2016 to night poaching. Longstaffe was fined £337 and ordered to pay £150 costs. Turner received a £202 fine and £150 costs.

The pair were also handed a two-year restraining order that prevents them from contacting the victim or entering their land.

The court heard that at around 12.35am on Wednesday 6 January 2016, the victim was alerted by an acquaintance to possible poaching activity taking place on the private land he manages to the north of Wimborne and alerted police.

The victim located the offenders inside a Mitsubishi 4x4. The Mitsubishi reversed at speed toward the victim's vehicle and crashed into it. The offenders also fired steal shot at the victim and his car, the court was told.

The victim managed to reverse away from the offenders and lost sight of them. The police helicopter tracked the men to Tarrant Monkton where they were arrested. The Mitsubishi was recovered and examined. The boot contained over 100 pheasants that were either dead, or alive but maimed.

Police Constable Claire Dinsdale, of Dorset Police's Rural Crime Team, said: “We are committed to tackling rural crime and I hope these convictions sends out a very clear message that we will not tolerate poaching and related activity in Dorset.

“We will continue to work with partner agencies and landowners to prosecute offenders accordingly.

“We regularly patrol rural areas and we would ask the public remain vigilant to such crimes and come forward with any information.”

**If you would like further information regarding the work of the PPDG, contact Glynn Evans at BASC [glynn.evans@basc.org.uk](mailto:glynn.evans@basc.org.uk)**

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