



POACHING PRIORITY DELIVERY GROUP NEWSLETTER

 **PROJECT
POACHER**

What is the Poaching Priority Delivery Group?

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Poaching Priority Delivery Group (PPDG) newsletter. Previous editions can be found [here](#).

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) strategies to tackle **wildlife** and **rural** crime recognise the seriousness, impact and importance of tackling poaching and hare coursing, with poaching being included as a priority in both strategies.

Poaching is one of the UK's six wildlife crime priorities and each one 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). The PPDG comprises representatives from the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Crown Prosecution Service, the Police, British Deer Society (BDS), Countryside Alliance (CA), Country Land and Business Association Ltd (CLA), Environment Agency (EA), Food Standards Agency (FSA), National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), National Farmers Union (NFU) and Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA).

In line with the NPCC strategies, our work is driven by a simple 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.*



Project Poacher is an initiative of the PPDG and 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 guidance from other experienced officers, training, publicity and advice material including posters which individual police forces can use for their own anti-poaching publicity campaigns.

SPOTLIGHT ON Kevin Summerson, Environment Agency

I have worked for the Environment Agency (EA) since it was formed in 1996 but have almost 36 years' experience as a water bailiff. I joined Northumbrian Water in 1978 and three years later became a water bailiff. In 1989, the ten water authorities were split up; some parts were privatised and became the water companies we know today.



I was a bailiff for ten years, a senior bailiff/fisheries enforcement officer for 11 years, then a fisheries enforcement team leader for 11 years. My role now is that of a technical specialist providing advice to the fisheries enforcement team in the North East.

I have witnessed and been part of the many changes that have determined the focus of those responsible for regulation within the EA; in truth I have driven or been influential in some of those changes myself. When the National Rivers Authority came into being, our main concerns were illegal fishing, pollution, in-river works, illegal abstraction of water and even people fishing legally – the fish are still there and vulnerable.

Our work against salmon poachers is not funded from rod licence revenue. Serious enforcement is paid for by grant aid from Defra – which has been reduced dramatically in recent years. While the North East prides itself in the partnership working initiatives it has developed with angling clubs, we are constantly striving to develop others. We have always worked closely with all the police forces in our area, even being involved with awareness training of new recruits at Durham Police HQ. The Volunteer Bailiff Scheme and Fisheries Enforcement Support Service, developed and managed by the Angling Trust, is another example of our partnership working.

In the 2019 New Year Honours List, Kevin was awarded the British Empire Medal for his dedication and hard work.

Derbyshire Constabulary rural crime team

PC Emerson Buckingham introduces the new team based in Matlock.

We are a team of seven PCs, one sergeant, and two full-time police staff members. The team went force-wide on the 2 August 2019. The head of the unit is Insp Meakin. We are a county-wide resource that works closely with our neighbouring forces.



All of the team are specialist wildlife crime officers and we are also supported by other front-line officers who have been trained in wildlife crime.

We have a large amount of equipment at our disposal which includes 4x4 vehicles, both marked and unmarked, two drones and the Polaris Ranger for extreme off-road capability.

The UTV is not a day-to-day response vehicle, but rather a specialist piece of kit that will allow rural crime officers to patrol previously inaccessible locations. It will also ensure that people and equipment can be transported across remote terrain in emergencies.

We deal with all the wildlife crime that is reported to the force as well as acquisitive crime such as the theft of farming equipment, preventing the persecution of protected species and the illegal trade in endangered species and poaching issues.

The north of the force is open moorlands with a number of grouse moors. The north east of the county is arable and dairy farming. And south of the county is the same as the north east with a large number of game shoots in the county.

PC Ashley Weller of Gloucestershire Constabulary describes an innovative technique to help deter hare coursing

In Gloucestershire, like many counties, our Rural Crime Team faces many challenges. Some of these challenges often feel far detached from conventional policing.

We face our generic challenges like hare coursing, deer poaching and other rural crimes with the help of advanced bits of kit. The use of thermal imaging spotters, night vision, drones with thermal imaging capability, quad bikes and an off-road buggy, which have all had their speed limiters and power restrictors removed, really does give us the upper hand enables us to react quickly.

One thing we can't be everywhere all the time, and we needed a solution to this. We began looking through history to see how people had protected land and structures in the past. The answer was soil bunds.

With Smith's Waste Management we have stopped hare coursers and deer coursers getting their vehicles onto farmland. Waste soil from development sites is tested for contaminants. Once certified as safe, we get a U1 exemption to allow the legal tipping of soil. The soil is then taken to the farmland and the bunds are created. We're also working with the Cotswold AONB Grassland Project to sow the bunds with native wildflower mix. The bunds have proven extremely successful, with not a single infiltration on land where the bunds have been created. We have now created 20km of these impenetrable earth barriers and many more are planned.



Rural Crime Week of Action

From 6-13 October 2019, a Rural Crime Week of Action was run by police forces across the country. The aim was to target criminals who are blighting our rural communities with offences such as poaching and illegal coursing, badger baiting, fly tipping, farm and fuel theft, burglary and anti-social behaviour.

This was a great success, resulting in multiple arrests and vehicle seizures. In some cases involving poaching offences, dogs were also seized. Hundreds of stop checks on vehicles were carried out, enabling us to disrupt rural criminals and gain valuable intelligence.

Thanks go to the police officers, police staff, volunteers and other rural groups who took part.

Below are some of the many reports that have been released by various police forces and other organisations:



- In Cambridgeshire, throughout that week officers patrolled and conducted proactive operations throughout rural areas. This included hare coursing patrols with Operation Galileo.
- The Environment Agency joined Cleveland Police and the Angling Trust to deliver several different activities across Tees Valley. These included foot and boat patrols of rivers and riverbanks in the area, rod licence checks and awareness exercises with local anglers and food sellers.
- There were coastal enforcement patrols of Seaton Carew and Hartlepool coastlines. This exercise involved Cleveland Police's rural team, British Nuclear Police, Border Force Police, Natural England, Hartlepool Coast Watch and Hartlepool Borough Council. The patrols discovered anchor ropes for illegal nets buried in the sand.



Martin Grady (skipper) from Environment Agency and PCSOs Darren Hatfield and James Dinsdale of Cleveland Police on the River Tees

- Kent Police stopped a vehicle in the Doddington area and officers seized catapults, ball bearings and knives which they believe may have been used in poaching offences. All of the items will now be destroyed. Also shown below are items taken from suspected illegal metal detectorists (nighthawks).



Items seized by the Kent Police

- In Essex, the Police rural engagement team patrolled known hare coursing hotspots. They seized a car and a dog involved in hare coursing. They visited farmers whose land had been used by hare coursers. Operation Galileo patrols were carried out throughout the week.
- Cheshire's new dedicated rural crime team took part in initiatives which tackled key issues that prove a real blight to the rural community, including poaching and hare coursing. Numerous vehicles were stopped and checked, providing intelligence on poaching, fly tipping, and illegal fishing activities.
- Humberside Police worked with other forces and partners mounting extra, dedicated, intelligence-led operations to tackle wildlife and rural crime across their area.
 Operation Galileo tackled hare coursing during the daytime while Operation Zodiac tackled poaching and rural crime during the night.
 Humberside wildlife and rural crime officer PC Brandon Ward said: "Vehicles suspected of being used in poaching were seized, with one becoming stuck in a field after trying to evade patrols."
- Cumbria police received reports of poachers in the Stainmore area. A 51-year-old man from Lancashire was arrested on suspicion of trespass on land at night, destroying game, and possession of a bladed article. He was released under investigation.



SUCCESSSES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST WILDLIFE AND RURAL CRIME

Derbyshire man found guilty of hunting hares with a dog

Thomas Stark, 25, of Sandiacre, was convicted in August 2019 at Southern Derbyshire Magistrates Court of the offence, which took place in Weston-on-Trent in December 2018.

Stark was handed a five-year Criminal Behaviour Order which prohibits him from trespassing on private land with dogs. He was also ordered to pay more than £3,700 in fines and costs and his dog was seized and made the subject of a forfeiture order, meaning it will be rehomed.



Cambridge police slap bans on four suspected hare coursers

In October 2018, four men were handed County Court injunctions to prevent them from hare coursing in Cambridgeshire. The men were suspected of being involved in a total of 69 hare coursing incidents.

Denny Loveridge, James Crickmore, John Jefford and Mark Loveridge were caught by police using a new database designed to track and convict suspected hare coursers.

The injunctions will mean the men cannot enter any farm land in Cambridgeshire during the months of the hare coursing season.

The judge was satisfied that the men had been involved in hare coursing over a two-year period.

Mark Loveridge, 38, of Milton Place, Horton, Slough, was suspected of 13 hare coursing incidents. As a result he must not own a sighthound or drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle during hare coursing season.

John Jefford, 42, of Scotland Road, Cambridge, was suspected of 13 hare coursing incidents. He must not own a sighthound or be in the company of another person with one.

Denny Loveridge, 38, of Mill Place Caravan Park, Datchet, Slough was suspected of 17 incidents. He must not own a sighthound or drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle during the hare coursing season.

James Crickmore, 38, of Fen Road, Cambridge was suspected of 26 incidents. He must not own a sighthound or be in the company of another person with one.



Mud and floods foils more hare coursers in Cambridgeshire



Also in Cambridgeshire, the What3Words app was used to direct rural police officers to this vehicle which got stuck during an illegal coursing event. Officers said their Shogun had no trouble rounding up all five occupants as they tried to run but they got a little muddy.



Two carloads of hare coursers had a long squelch home after trying to drive through the flooded Welney Wash Road. Seven men with dogs were seen swimming from the area.



North Yorkshire Police seize 4x4 after poaching reports

In November 2019, North Yorkshire Police received calls reporting a group of men with lurcher dogs poaching near Sutton-on-the-Forest. A 4x4 suspected of being used in poaching was seized by rural taskforce officers and a 28-year-old man was reported for driving without insurance.



Suspects arrested and dogs seized in Lincolnshire

In January 2020, eight people were arrested and five dogs and two vehicles were seized by Lincolnshire Police's rural crime team in Washway Road, Holbeach.

The five were arrested on suspicion of driving a motor vehicle dangerously, failing to stop, hunting a wild animal and using a vehicle on a road without any insurance. They were all later released under investigation.

Hare coursers stopped in East Hertfordshire

In November 2019, a Honda CRV was seized by police and subsequently crushed after being used by hare coursers. The force's rural crime team, backed up by special constables, stopped the vehicle following reports that hare coursers had plagued farmers for weeks, damaging crops. Five men were reported for poaching offences. The car and six dogs were seized.



One crushed car, used in the crime

Poaching gangs target Shropshire – November 2019

Poachers are targeting Shropshire, with farmers and landowners being hit hard by the loss of hundreds of animals and birds.

Police said the county is the worst hit in the Midlands. One incident involved the theft of 200 ducks from a property near Bridgnorth.

Pheasants, partridges, rabbits and deer have been killed by organised gangs, thought to be coming from outside the region. Hare coursing is also a problem, particularly in North Shropshire.

At least one deer was taken from woods in South Shropshire. Officers said deer poaching had taken place around the Chorley area. Police have increased rural patrols in the areas affected and asked for all suspicious incidents to be reported to them.

Three men face court over hare coursing in Wiltshire

On 12 November 2019, police were called to farmland in Barford St Martin, near Salisbury, where three men with dogs had been seen acting suspiciously. The men from the Poole area were located and searched. They have been summoned to court under section 30 of the Game Act and their vehicle was seized. Section 35 dispersal orders were also issued.

Three men arrested in rural crime swoop

Officers from the Wiltshire rural crime team, local community policing team and civilian volunteers including gamekeepers, farmers and MoD deer managers, were involved in an operation in December.

Following a report of a suspicious Subaru vehicle in Lower Eveleigh, officers tried to stop the car but the driver made off. They pursued the Subaru onto Salisbury Plain where it was located by the police helicopter. Three men with dogs discovered hiding in the woods at Sidbury Hill were arrested on suspicion of failing to stop their vehicle when directed, hunting a wild mammal with dogs and using a vehicle without insurance.



The men, all from Hampshire, were taken into custody and were later released pending further enquiries.

In another incident in Wiltshire, four men were arrested on suspicion of poaching in the Winterbourne Stoke area. Following reports of suspicious activity on private land, officers found the men in a pickup with two dogs and some catapults.

Man banned from rural areas following conviction

Scott Matthew Cochrane, 30, from Poole, appeared at Poole Magistrates' Court in November for an application by Dorset Police and the Crown Prosecution Service to vary an existing Criminal Behaviour Order after he was found on land in possession of dead rabbits, a catapult and steel shot in October 2019.

Cochrane had pleaded guilty at a previous hearing to offences of being in possession of a wild animal in breach of a Criminal Behaviour Order, and for hunting a wild mammal with a dog, an offence under Section 1 of the Hunting Act 2004.

Cochrane was subject to a five-year Criminal Behaviour Order imposed in May 2015 that prohibited him from being in possession of a wild animal or bird in Dorset as well as other prohibitions relating to the county.

At the hearing on 19 November 2019, magistrates agreed to impose the order for a further three years.

PC Claire Dinsdale, Rural Crime Co-ordinator for Dorset Police, said: "This varied order is a first of its kind for rural crime, in that it bans the defendant from large areas of rural land across three counties and it restricts his ownership of certain dog breeds."

Kent man jailed for cruelty

Jimmy Price, 25, was convicted at Medway Magistrates court of causing unnecessary suffering to a horse and failing to meet the welfare needs of two dogs.

At an earlier trial, in December 2019, he had also been convicted of four offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, Deer Act 1991 and Hunting Act 2004 for offences of using dogs on hares and deer, and for stabbing a deer.

He was sentenced on 10 January 2019 for all offences and was sent to prison for 225 days, disqualified from keeping dogs for five years and ordered to pay £5,000 in costs and a victim surcharge of £115.

The court also ordered a deprivation order on the horse and two dogs. Two other men were also sentenced for causing unnecessary suffering to horses.

Deer found shot and decapitated on New Forest road

Hampshire Police are asking for information about an incident involving a deer on the A338 in Ringwood. The large fallow buck was found near Blashford Lake on the morning of Wednesday 29 January 2020. It had gunshot wounds to its legs and body, and its head had been removed. It also appeared to have been hit by a vehicle.

Although this killing follows a string of others involving livestock in recent months, police are currently not linking it to any other incidents.

Finally, many congratulations to PC Claire Dinsdale of Dorset Police on being awarded the Queen's Police Medal in the New Year Honours List for her tireless work on preventing rural and wildlife crime. Claire represents the South West Regional Enforcement Group with the PPDG.



Resources and information:

www.projectpoacher.com

This is a website dedicated to poaching and illegal coursing. It has a free information and reporting App to download, with links to the Poaching Priority Delivery Group and BASC.

Wildlife Crime Policing Strategy 1

Wildlife Crime Policing Strategy 2

The NPCC rural crime strategy sets out the aims for rural crime and wildlife crime in England and Wales.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Allows callers to report crime and incidents anonymously – 0800 555 111.

NFU Rural Crime Reporting Line

By calling **0800 783 0137** or visiting **www.ruralcrimereportingline.uk**, farmers, rural businesses and the public can anonymously give information about crime relating to:

- Large-scale, industrial fly-tipping
- Hare coursing
- Machinery theft
- Livestock theft



Environment Agency incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60 (24hr).

For advice on angling, licensing, illegal fishing methods, netting, pollution and environmental issues.

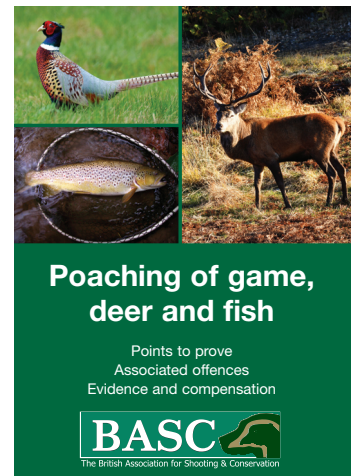
CPS Hare Coursing Advice

The Crown Prosecution Service have legal guidance for prosecutors when dealing with hare coursing cases. This best practice advice should help ensure the appropriate outcomes to these cases and can be found [here](#).

BASC Poaching of game, deer and fish booklet

Poaching is a serious crime. To help the police and other countryside users recognise and report poaching and other rural crime, BASC has produced this booklet. This booklet provides essential information and advice for law enforcers, gamekeepers, farmers and others affected by poaching. Working in partnership on a national basis as part of Project Trespass, BASC aims to increase awareness of poaching and associated crimes and to help identify action which can be taken to stop poachers.

This booklet is also available in hard copy to members and law enforcers by contacting the BASC game and gundogs team on 01244 573 019 or by **email**.



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If you would like further information regarding the work of the PPDG, please contact Glynn Evans at BASC glynn.evans@basc.org.uk

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