

RURAL TIMES

ISSUE 25 • WINTER 2025/26

PROTECTING
OUR RURAL
COMMUNITIES

HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT



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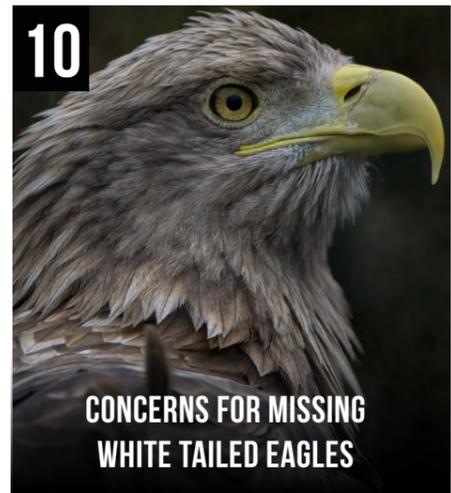


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WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF RURAL TIMES



Inspector Cath Macdonald

The last 9 months on the Country Watch Rural Crime Taskforce has been a blur of activity, with the team regularly patrolling rural areas and making the county a hostile environment for rural criminals. Whilst other teams across the force are working in this area as well, the Taskforce is a dedicated team that is focused on proactively targeting crime in rural communities.

I hope you have been able to follow our successes across our many Facebook pages, and you will read about more of these in this edition of Rural Times. We have been working from Fordingbridge to Crondall, Tadley to Hayling Island and all the areas between. As an indicator of our success so far, we as a team have located and recovered £328500 worth of

stolen equipment, vehicles, plant and machinery, the majority of which has been returned to their rightful owners. This is taking money out of the criminals' pockets and disrupting their activity.

There have been proactive operations targeting hare coursing, fish poaching and theft of plant and farm machinery, all of which cause significant concern amongst those impacted. We're aware of poly-criminality and that by targeting hare coursers we're also targeting those committing acquisitive crime. We seize vehicles for driving whilst disqualified or without insurance, whatever it takes to disrupt.

It's not just the Taskforce targeting crime in rural areas – we are part of a much bigger force team that includes Contact Management, NPT and DPT, roads policing (RPU), CID to name a few. As this is not their specialised area, we're working with these teams to ensure they're kept up to date with their rural knowledge through various training

inputs. I provide rural training to the initial courses for new PCs and new call handlers, and the team provide an input on the RPU initial skills course. This is alongside any sharing of information and knowledge that the team conduct when working with others. This extended knowledge can be seen in the efforts of the rural Local Bobbies across the force who have been working tirelessly to support their communities, listen to their concerns and conduct problem solving initiatives. As an example, Op Knievel in Hart targets vehicle and motorbike ASB, Op Wolf in the New Forest has been targeting waste crime, and Op Jovian is targeting ongoing issues around game bird poaching and related criminality in the Upham area.

It's been a busy time for the team. I'm immensely proud of what they've achieved in this time, and I hope that there has been an impact on the daily lives of those living and working within rural communities.

KEEPING EYES ON RURAL CRIME AN UPDATE FROM PCC DONNA JONES



Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner

PCC Donna Jones has warned organised crime gangs and criminals targeting rural areas across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, "We've got our EyesOn you!"

It came as she launched EyesOn, the first rural crime-fighting app of its kind in the UK, which she has helped to fund.

It will be free for approved users across the two counties providing a digital solution to filing crime reports, a secure 'chat' function for local users and police, while information is sent to officers in a police compliant format and the app's AI data analytics help support rural policing priorities.

The PCC said: "EyesOn is a revolutionary new app, a game changer in the fight against rural crime for our countryside communities and local police.

"Across Hampshire and the

Isle of Wight, our beautiful countryside is all too often blighted by the damage caused by criminal activity. Organised gangs target these areas and businesses, threatening to put many rural sites out of business.

"My message to criminal gangs moving across our wonderful two counties is this - we've got our eyes on you, and we are coming after you."

For more information on EyesOn go to www.eyesonapp.com



TASK FORCE RESPONDS TO HARE COURSING REPORTS ACROSS HAMPSHIRE AND SEIZES DOGS & VEHICLES

The Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, with support from neighbourhoods policing, have been responding to recent reports of hare coursing in Hampshire.

On the evening of 27 February the Task Force were patrolling throughout the county when two calls came in regarding suspected hare coursing.

The first was in the Preston Candover area, where the team were assisted by officers from Basingstoke, and air support from the NPAS helicopter. The suspected coursers fled the area on police arrival, leaving behind a dog which was subsequently seized by police.

The second incident that night occurred near Odiham, where it was suspected that individuals were trespassing on land to course, however they had already left once Task Force officers got to the scene.

In the early hours of the following morning, a report of coursing came in for the Bentley area. The suspects left a lurcher type dog abandoned at the location, which was subsequently taken to a vet. Police have been following up enquiries on this.

Later in the afternoon on 28 February, Task Force officers attended land in East Worldham after concerns were raised around coursing in the area. No offences were confirmed, and the landowner had asked some individuals with dogs to leave the area, which they

did. That night, the Task Force returned to the same area of the county with further reports of suspected coursers on the land, however no one was present when police arrived and conducted searches of the surrounding area.

Earlier in the month, a Subaru Legacy was seized by the Task Force after it was abandoned on private land near Dummer.



It is suspected that the occupants were involved in hare coursing on the evening of 18 February before the vehicle became stuck, and the occupants left the area on foot accompanied by dogs.

If you see abandoned vehicles on farmland, or suspicious people with vehicles or dogs, please report this to police.

On Monday 10 March, police located an abandoned van with damage and a dog cage in the rear, which is suspected of potentially being linked to coursing in the Ropley area.



Officers will continue to patrol the vast rural spaces of the county, respond to any calls for service that come in, seize dogs and vehicles linked to poachers, and conduct proactive stops of any suspicious individuals or vehicles in the countryside.

We encourage people impacted by rural crime, including coursing and poaching, to report incidents to us as they happen on 999.

If you have information about suspicious activity, or that you think might help our enquiries or patrols, you can submit this to us by calling 101 or using the report tool at www.hampshire.police.uk

CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE

Cable theft from electric charging points



We're aware of instances of electric charging points being targeted by criminals, including organised crime groups, who are cutting charging cables in order to remove the copper running through the inside of the cable to sell on.

Residential addresses and personal charging cables could also be targeted by criminals, so it is important to consider protecting your charging point and cable by following a few simple steps:

- Install in a safe location such as a garage or out of sight from the street.

- Use dusk to dawn lighting or visible CCTV cameras.

- Use a dashcam with a "parking mode" or motion sensor feature to record activity around your car. Visible cameras can deter thieves, and footage provides essential evidence for police and insurance claims.

- Security marking your equipment with a unique identifier, such as a serial number or forensic liquid such as [SelectaDNA](#) makes it harder for thieves to sell and easier for police to trace.

- Choose a tethered charger: A tethered charger has its cable permanently attached to the

unit, making it significantly more difficult for opportunistic thieves to remove it.

- For untethered chargers, use a heavy-duty cable lock similar to a bike lock to secure the cable to a fixed point, such as a wall or your vehicle's wheel

- Choose products that have been tested and certified by Sold Secure and Secured by Design (SBD) to the Police Preferred Specification.

- For both home and commercial chargers, you can install physical barriers like bollards or guards to prevent accidental damage from vehicles and deter thieves by restricting access.

- When not in use, remove your charging cables from your boot and store them inside your home or in a secure, lockable box.

- Report all incidents to police.

Horsebox and trailer security

Physical security

Consider fitting a combination of several products such as a hitch lock anti-theft device, wheel clamps and locking wheel nuts.

If your trailer is stored in a barn or on a hard concrete surface, a Secured By Design approved ground anchor with a heavy duty chain with a high attack rating is another option to be considered.

Restrict access

If your trailer or horsebox is parked on the driveway, consider closing any gates at night or when you are not using it. If you don't have gates, a vehicle bollard will provide an extra visible deterrent.

Record details

Keep a record of serial numbers, chassis and model numbers and take note of any custom marks on the horsebox or trailer. Take colour photographs from several angles and additionally take videos with a smartphone if possible, including markings. If stolen, this helps police track & identify the horsebox/trailer.

Security marking

Security marking your trailer or horsebox using an SBD recognised forensic asset marking is another highly effective, visible deterrent to thieves and an established method of reducing theft.

Tracking systems

Fit an SBD approved tracking device to the horsebox so it can be traced if stolen. Secured By Design have several members which specialise in this area and can advise on the best system and fitting of the product.

Tack

Don't leave any tack in the horsebox overnight – store it away safely and be especially careful at events and shows.

Insurance

Check you have adequate cover under your insurance for theft for your tack, including overnight shows away from home.





DAYS - AND NIGHTS - IN THE LIFE OF HAMPSHIRE'S COUNTRY WATCH RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE

The Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force have been covering the length and breadth of the county's countryside to patrol, make arrests, stop suspicious vehicles and recover stolen property.

In January, police located a stolen Thwaites dumper abandoned in foliage on waste land. Days earlier, patrols along the border of Test Valley and Southampton resulted in officers discovering a motorbike abandoned in woodland, which had been stolen in Southampton, before it was returned to its owner.



The same month the team found an abandoned motorbike in Beaulieu. This particular bike had been reported stolen back in November, and officers pushed it back to the owner's address.

On Monday 26 January, the team were patrolling in Winchester district when they found a van parked up in a wooded area. Checks determined it had been stolen from Southampton only

an hour earlier. It was seized by police and the owner was delighted to hear the vehicle had been found.

The horse trailer pictured below was found and recovered by officers on waste land in Bramley, before it was determined to have been stolen from Baughurst.



The Task Force has set its sights on serious and organised criminals operating in rural areas. These offenders are predominantly involved in burgling farms and rural estates to steal machinery and farming equipment, as well as routinely being involved in offences such as poaching and hare coursing.

Recent operations were stood up in autumn and winter in the remote areas of the county, with high visibility patrols and vehicle stops being undertaken late at night to identify any potential crimes, and importantly to deter any offences occurring in the first place.

Whilst the deterrent effect has been felt in previous months, with 26% reductions in the commission of hare coursing and farm machinery thefts in the period June 2025 to January 2026, compared to the same period the previous year, we cannot be complacent. The Task Force will continue to have an active presence day and night in rural Hampshire.

The darkened rural roads and byways are a route for all manner of criminals however, many of whom are being picked up by officers on their patrols, with the Task Force being involved in the seizure of large quantities of drugs and arrests of suspected drug dealers.



On 8 January, the Task Force stopped a Honda CR-V in Halter Way, Andover and seized suspected Class A drugs. As a result, 38-year-old Thomas Gilbert, of no fixed abode, was charged with possession of Class A drugs with intent to supply, driving whilst disqualified and driving without insurance.

He appeared at Southampton Magistrates' Court and was remanded in custody. He will appear at Winchester Crown Court on a date yet to be fixed.

Between 13 and 15 January, the Task Force were deployed as part of a force-wide effort to target offenders using the roads in Hampshire, during an operation led by the Basingstoke Neighbourhood Enforcement Team (NET) and the Intelligence department. A total of 69 vehicles were stopped on the roads in the north and east of Hampshire, seven of these vehicles were seized, 11 arrests were made and weapons and Class A drugs were seized.

The Task Force specifically stopped

a vehicle near Havant and seized a block of suspected Class A drugs. Two people in the vehicle were arrested and have since been charged. Besmir Balavija, 28, of no fixed abode, was charged with possession with intent to supply a controlled drug of Class A, driving without a licence and an offence under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Renalto Haspepa, 27, of no fixed abode, was charged with possession with intent to supply a controlled drug of Class A. Both men appeared at Portsmouth Magistrates Court on Friday 16 January, and have been remanded to appear at Portsmouth Crown Court on Monday 16 March.

Criminals are not afraid to cross the county's borders to commit crime, and working closely with our neighbouring forces is key to catching offenders.

The Task Force recently assisted officers from Surrey and Sussex with a jewellery burglary where a Range Rover was stolen from Hampshire, used in the offences, and then located burnt out in Hampshire. A suspect was subsequently arrested. Separately,

the Task Force went on patrol with the Sussex Rural Crime Team recently as part of efforts to deter farm machinery and plant theft. The vehicle pictured below was located burnt out in the Chilbolton area, and is suspected to have been used for poaching previously.



We encourage anyone with information about suspicious people or vehicles – including abandoned or burnt out vehicles – to report this to police. Your reports can help us to reunite stolen vehicles to their owners, or target our patrols to the areas that criminals are operating.



COURT RESULT

HAMPSHIRE RURAL TASK FORCE SUPPORTS SURREY INVESTIGATION INTO £347K PLANT AND VEHICLE THEFTS

Last year, officers from Hampshire's Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force supported colleagues from Surrey Police with a series of warrants in Surrey and Hampshire, as part of an investigation into a high value plant machinery and vehicle theft investigation.

The investigation, which was led by Surrey's Serious and Organised Crime Unit, has now resulted in four men, including two from Hampshire, being sentenced for their roles in a conspiracy which saw more than £347,000 worth of vehicles stolen.

On 27 January this year, the following individuals were sentenced:

- James Sayers, 36, of Bramley, was jailed for 3 years for conspiracy to steal.
- Freddie Stevens, 22, of Bordon, was jailed for 3 years for conspiracy to steal, burglary and theft of two motor vehicles.
- James Smith, 38, of Guildford, was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, suspended for 18

months, for conspiracy to steal.

•Ben Price, 45, of Guildford, was sentenced to 12 months in jail for handling stolen goods. Price was released at court due to time he had already served on remand.

The machines and vehicles were generally stolen during the hours of darkness from building sites, car parks and the driveways of residential properties.

Their thefts predominantly targeted high value 4X4s such as Land Rovers and Range Rovers, as well as vans to transport small plant machinery.

Once stolen, both vehicles and machinery were parked and left for several days before being moved on to their end destination.

While on bail, Stevens assisted with the theft of two Range Rovers, which were subsequently used in a burglary of Clayden & Co Jewellers in Bognor Regis.

One of these was driven into the metal gate at the shopfront, enabling Stevens to enter the building and empty the display cabinets of jewellery before fleeing

the scene. Both vehicles were later set on fire, one in Hampshire and the other in West Sussex.

The owner of Clayden & Co Jewellers confirmed that almost his entire stock, valued at approximately £30,000, had been stolen, with a further £20,000 worth of damage caused to the premises.

A forensic examination of the scene identified blood splatters on the shattered glass and around the damaged display cabinets. DNA analysis produced a positive match to Freddie Stevens. He was subsequently arrested when he attended the police station as part of his bail conditions.



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT CONSTABULARY WINS INNOVATOR FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AWARD



HUMANE ANIMAL DISPATCH

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary has been awarded for its innovative Humane Animal Dispatch (HAD) volunteer scheme.

The RSPCA Pawprints Awards 2025 took place at The Met Hotel in Leeds on Thursday 13 November, and celebrates public bodies and partners that go the extra mile to protect and promote animal welfare.

Inspector Stu Ross and Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force Co-ordinator Hazel Cross were recognised for their efforts in creating and running the HAD scheme, which sees civilian volunteers called out by the force control room 24/7, 365 days a year, to reports of injured deer which have been involved in collisions on Hampshire's roads.

They both attended the event, where they picked up the Innovator for Animal Welfare Award.

Deploying a HAD volunteer means we are not allowing an animal to suffer unnecessarily. Dispatch of the animal is completed as effectively and humanely as possible.

Inspector Stu Ross said: "The support our HAD volunteers provide to policing at the roadside is phenomenal – not only are they experts in their field, ensuring that animals do not suffer unnecessarily in the aftermath of a collision, but their deployment ensures other police resources can direct their focus elsewhere.

"Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary pioneered the police-led scheme more than 15 years ago. At that time, it operated as a local agreement with gamekeepers, farmers, deerstalkers and deer managers from rural communities before it was re-developed in 2022 into its current format.

"In 2024 we launched our scheme nationally to an audience of police colleagues around the country, and we are pleased that other forces have already recognised the scheme as best practice and are exploring adopting it in their area.

Congratulating the team, Chief Constable Alexis Boon said: "I am incredibly proud that this ground-breaking scheme has been nationally recognised in this way.

"I have seen the hard work and dedication that Inspector Ross, Hazel Cross and the rest of the Country Watch Rural Crime Taskforce, have put into this project that has become best practice for forces up and down the country.

"They identified a problem and developed an innovative way to change the way these incidents are dealt with, not only to help ease the suffering of the animals, but also to help ensure our officers are doing what they do best, proactively tackling crime and bringing criminals to justice.

"My thanks also goes to the team of committed volunteers who have made this scheme possible."





DISAPPEARANCE OF THREE EAGLES IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

FORESTRY ENGLAND

The public are being asked to help the police investigate the suspicious disappearance of three white-tailed eagles. The cases include a chick born in the wild earlier this year in Sussex, one of the first white-tailed eagles to fledge in England for more than 240 years.

The missing birds are part of a project led by Forestry England and the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation to reintroduce this lost species to England. Their disappearance is being investigated by several police forces and the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

All of the released birds are tagged with satellite trackers allowing the team to closely follow their location and movements. In September the trackers of two eagles were found dumped close to the birds' last recorded location. Both had been cut off the birds using a sharp instrument. In the case of another eagle, its tag has stopped sending data. The last message received from the device was on 8 November and no sightings of the bird have been recorded since then.

On 26 September, a satellite tag belonging to one of the chicks was recovered from the River Rother, near Petersfield. It had been removed from the bird using a sharp instrument. Searches in the area to locate the body of the bird have been unsuccessful.

Sussex police are appealing for information from anyone who was in or

around Harting Down and Petersfield on the evening of 20 September 2025. Any members of the public who may have seen the bird or any suspicious behaviour can contact them on 101, or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Dyfed Powys Police are investigating a similar incident on 13 September, where a satellite tag was recovered in remote moorland. The tag had been removed with a sharp instrument before being hidden in an attempt to dispose of it. The bird has not been found despite searches in the area. The force is interested in hearing from anyone who was at or around the Gwgja Reservoir, Tregynon between 11am and 1pm or on access land near Bryn y Fawngog between 12 noon and 3pm on 13 September.



In a third incident, the tag of another eagle which usually transmits the data daily, has stopped working. The last transmission was sent on 8 November in the Moorfoot Hills area. Police Scotland are treating the disappearance as suspicious and asking anyone with information to contact them on 101 or to call Crimestoppers.

The reintroduction of white-tailed eagles is conducted under licence from Natural England, the Government's wildlife licensing authority. White-tailed eagles are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Disturbing, destroying or interfering with them and their nests are criminal offences.

Tim Mackrill from the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation said: "We monitor the satellite data, showing the birds' minute-by-minute movements, on a daily basis and always investigate any suspicious or unusual data. It was devastating to find the stolen and dumped tags, particularly for the chick in Sussex who fledged this summer and had only just begun its life. So many people in the area had shared the joy of seeing these birds breed again after hundreds of years and our ongoing monitoring has shown how well they were fitting into the landscape. To have that destroyed just a few months later is deeply shocking."

Steve Egerton-Read, White-Tailed Eagle Project Officer for Forestry England, said: "We are returning this lost species to the English landscape and have had so much support from the public. These special birds are helping people connect with the natural world and showing how with a little bit of help nature can thrive. We are asking the public to show this support again by encouraging anyone who has information that may help the police investigation to come forward."



CLA DELIVERS RURAL TRAINING TO POLICE OFFICERS

LUCY CHARMAN - COUNTRY LAND AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (CLA)

Since joining the CLA three years ago, I have regularly attended the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police Strategic Rural Crime Partnership which meets every quarter.

It brings together key representatives from across the rural space to tackle crime proactively as a partnership which has resulted in improved communication, understanding and resourcing, with a newly launched CountryWatch rural taskforce earlier this year.

The CLA has lobbied nationally for improved rural training for police staff for a number of years, and I was delighted to replace words with action and deliver rural training to a room of 50 PCs, district commanders and inspectors from across the force, including the Isle of Wight.

Tackling rural crime is one of the force's priorities and there is a high level of support from newly appointed Chief Constable Alexis Boon, as well as ongoing and invaluable support both from Assistant Chief Constable Tara McGovern and Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones.

The day consisted of a full agenda:

- Insight into rural life, including the challenges and costs to landowners and rural businesses, crime types and seasonality, machinery costs and the impacts of waste crime covered jointly by myself, Tom Peters from the NFU and

Hugh Oliver Bellasis from the HAIOW Independent Advisory committee – a landowner and a staunch advocate of the rural world.



- Inspector Cath McDonald – who leads the CountryWatch rural taskforce – led a session on crime types and police powers, followed up by a joint session with Inspector Stuart Ross highlighting some of the innovative methods that can be used, how to gather appropriate evidence and things to recognise as indicators of illegal activity.

- Hands-on sessions included handling and identification of various types of firearms and ammunition, alongside understanding agricultural machinery, CESAR marking and GPS theft with Southwick Estate bringing farming equipment along into the carpark for live demonstrations.

- The recent National Rural and Wildlife Crime strategy highlighted the connection between rural and serious

organised crime and this topic was covered in detail by Detective Chief Inspector Dal Andrews highlighting the importance of intelligence gathering from rural communities, something which will be enabled through the announcement that the force will now work towards rolling out WhatsApp to their teams – another win for the partnership who have promoted this for a long time.

- Antisocial behaviour (ASB) and thorough understanding of prevention powers was a valuable session given the increase in ASB with e-scooters, catapults around the county and reinforced the different powers available.

- The final session closed with Mark Thomas from Farm Community Network, re-emphasising the mental health impact of crime on rural communities and promoting the support that is available, providing contact details for local officers to share with victims of crime.

It is recognised that there will always be a finite amount of police resource in rural locations with very few forces nationally benefitting from large dedicated rural teams, if at all.

Therefore, it is imperative that neighbourhood teams are equipped with the relevant training to understand and utilise tools, intelligence and cross-force expertise to maximise crime prevention.

CrimeStoppers

0800 555 111

100% anonymous. Always.



ANONYMOUS INFORMATION HELPS TACKLE RURAL CRIME

CRIMESTOPPERS

Organised criminals are increasingly operating in rural areas as they can make large profits stealing expensive farm equipment. The isolation afforded by countryside locations often helps them to carry out their illegal activity undisturbed. If somebody does interrupt them, they think nothing of resorting to intimidation and threats to try and keep members of the public silent.

This is where the charity Crimestoppers can help. If you have seen something suspicious or know who is involved in a crime, you can report it to Crimestoppers 100% anonymously. The charity will pass the information on to the police on your behalf whilst you remain anonymous - not even the charity themselves will know who you are. This means that the criminals will never know that you spoke up.

Raising awareness about rural theft

In the autumn of 2025, Crimestoppers launched a campaign across the county to highlight the problem of the theft of farm machinery and equipment, and to encourage members of the public to report information anonymously.

The campaign, raised awareness of how criminals operate in rural locations whilst highlighting some of the signs to spot that theft is being planned or carried out.

It reminded business owners of security measures they can take to help keep their property safe, and encouraged the public to report information anonymously about suspicious activity they had seen, people they know who are involved in thefts, or where stolen equipment is being sold.



Adverts were created for social media, local radio and for roadside locations such as petrol stations, which highlighted how criminals steal farm equipment and machinery, quickly transporting it over the county border or even overseas through our local ports.

An informative web page with more information about rural theft accompanied the campaign.

Making a difference to rural communities

There were around 4,000,000 opportunities created for local people to hear or see the adverts over a 4 week period. As a result, Crimestoppers received a 25% increase in anonymous information about crime in rural parts of Hampshire, and a 50% increase in anonymous information about burglary and theft across the whole county.

The information received was passed directly to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, or other appropriate law enforcement authority, within hours - after being checked to make sure that there was nothing in the report that could possibly identify the person who spoke up.

You can give information to Crimestoppers 24/7, 365 days of the year online and by phone.

When you contact the charity, your phone number, device or location cannot be traced, you won't be asked for your name or address and you don't speak to the police, make a witness statement, or go to court.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

0800 555 111

WASTE CRIME: A SERIOUS AND GROWING THREAT

LYNSEY SCHEMBRI - ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WASTE CRIME ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

Waste crime is a serious, organised and increasingly profitable form of crime. It harms the environment, undermines legitimate businesses and puts communities at risk. These offences generate substantial illegal income while leaving behind polluted land, increased fire risks, damaged neighbourhoods and significant clean-up costs. As waste crime becomes more sophisticated and closely linked to organised criminal networks, coordinated intelligence sharing and enforcement are essential.

What Is Waste Crime?

Waste crime covers a wide range of illegal activity: Operating unlicensed waste sites/unauthorised waste transfer stations; Illegally storing, treating or disposing of waste; Unlawfully exporting waste overseas; Falsifying or manipulating waste documentation; Breaching environmental permits or duty-of-care requirements. While these crimes occur in both urban and rural areas, rural lanes, farmland, industrial estates & coastal sites are particularly vulnerable due to accessibility and reduced oversight.

The Hidden Scale of the Problem

Despite its impact, waste crime remains significantly underreported. The

Environment Agency's 2025 National Waste Crime Survey found that only 27% of incidents are reported. Among farmers and landowners, 57% said they had been affected, yet just 12% reported their most recent incident.

Underreporting allows illegal operations to grow unchecked, increasing environmental damage, financial loss and risks to public safety. Many illegal sites expand quickly, becoming more hazardous and far more expensive to clear the longer they remain active.

Community Responsibility and Prevention

Residents, landowners and businesses all have a role in preventing waste crime. Simple preventative steps include:

- Use licensed & reputable waste carriers
- Verify all waste carrier registrations
- Conduct background checks before leasing land
- Establish clear, enforceable contracts

If you suspect illegal waste activity report it immediately to the Environment Agency's 24-hour Incident Hotline (0800 80 70 60), or anonymously to Crimestoppers (0800 555 111).

Case Study: Organised Waste Crime in Action

In January 2026, arrests were made during a major Environment Agency investigation into a large illegal waste site near Kidlington, Oxfordshire. Although outside Hampshire, the operation exposed clear cross-border links. A suspect was arrested in Andover, supported by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and the Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit. The site contained an estimated 21,000 tonnes of processed household waste, posing significant pollution and fire risks. The case illustrates how waste crime is organised, mobile and profit-driven.

A Shared Enforcement Challenge

Effective action against waste crime requires strong partnership working between the Environment Agency, local authorities and the Police. Where organised crime is involved, joint operations and robust intelligence sharing are essential. Only through coordinated enforcement can agencies protect communities, the environment and legitimate businesses from this growing threat.

**Pictures on header show an illegal waste site in Fareham (L) & the Kidlington site (R)*

RURAL ROUND-UP

THREE MEN ARRESTED AS PART OF RURAL BURGLARY CONSPIRACY INVESTIGATION FOLLOWING WARRANTS

Three men were arrested on 16 December during warrants at addresses in Yateley, Hook and Bracknell.

The Northern Area Crime Team launched an investigation after receiving reports that quad bikes, pick-up trucks, vans, plants, gardening equipment, and power tools had been stolen during rural burglaries on 35 separate occasions.

The incidents took place in East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Test Valley and Winchester between June and December 2025.

A 32-year-old man from Bracknell was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit burglary and conspiracy to steal.

A 30-year-old man from Hook was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit burglary.

A 27-year-old man from Yateley was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit burglary.

All three were bailed with conditions until 16 March while officers carry out further enquiries.

ROUND-UP: OUTCOMES AND ARRESTS FOR CRIMES REPORTED ACROSS RURAL HAMPSHIRE

Three teenagers have been given Community Resolutions for poaching offences in West Meon.

On 1 December police responded to reports of a collision involving a Hyundai Getz which occurred after concerns were raised around individuals poaching on land.

Officers attended and found two 18-year-old men and a 19-year-old man with the Hyundai. Attending officers located slingshots and ball bearings.

The three teens were detained by police before being issued with community resolutions with a requirement to attend victim awareness courses. The slingshots and ball bearings were seized by police for destruction.

A day prior to this, on 30 November, officers responded to reports of trespassers on land in Morestead, with concerns raised to police that they may have been hunting pheasants and partridges.

Police stopped and searched three individuals at the scene, along with a vehicle. A slingshot and ball bearings were located inside the car.

A 20-year-old man, who was part of the group that police stopped at the scene, was given a Community Resolution - whereby he accepted the offence of going equipped to commit poaching - with a condition to

complete a victim awareness course.

On 1 February police received reports of suspected poaching at Fleet Ponds. Officers from the Fleet Neighbourhoods Policing Team responded and located a group of people at the location. One member of this group - a 35-year-old man from Surrey - was arrested at the scene on suspicion of daytime trespass in pursuit of game.

The man was in possession of nine dogs, all of which were seized by police and taken to kennels to be cared for. Attending officers also located two dead rabbits at the scene. He has been bailed until 1 May while enquiries continue.

Officers investigating a £100,000 burglary and vehicle-related theft series in the New Forest have now charged two men.

Billy Ridout, 28, of Hedley Close, Fawley has been charged with conspiring to commit dwelling burglary, conspiring to commit non-dwelling burglary, conspiring to steal a motor vehicle, driving whilst disqualified and driving without insurance.

Thomas Anthony Wellman, 28, of Rushpole Court, Dibden has been charged with conspiring to steal a motor vehicle, conspiring to steal from a motor vehicle, conspiring to commit dwelling burglary, conspiring to commit non-dwelling burglary and handling stolen goods.

TEEN IN COURT AFTER FISH POACHING ENQUIRIES

A teenager is due in court following a fish poaching investigation.

Officers responded to reports of illegal fishing on the Itchen near Winchester on 21 August.

Two people were initially arrested, and police seized items including fishing rods, nets, ball bearings and air rifles.

Following a number of enquiries, 18-year-old Jimmy Doran, of Queens Road in Liphook, has been charged with unlawfully taking fish.

He will appear at Basingstoke Magistrates Court on 17 March.

FORDINGBRIDGE TROUT THEFT CHARGES

Two men have appeared in court charged with stealing from the New Forest Smokery and Trout Farm.

A number of fish were stolen from the farm in Fordingbridge on 4 May and 6 May last year.

Following enquiries, police charged these two men with two counts of theft each:

- Arthur Cooper-Bond, aged 19, and from Kimmeridge Avenue in Poole

- John Charlie James White, aged 27, and of Horton Road in Wimbeth, Dorset

They both appeared at Southampton Magistrates Court on 23 February this year.

At the hearing, they both pleaded guilty to the offences. White was ordered to pay a £200 fine and £50 compensation, while Cooper-Bond was ordered to pay a £120 fine and £50 compensation.

RURAL ROUND-UP

QUAD BIKE SEIZED FOLLOWING HARE COURSING REPORT



Police seized a quad bike following a report of hare coursing near the old runway at Blackbushe Airport on 16 December.

Attending officers spotted a man attempting to start a quad bike with two dogs on the back. He subsequently fled the area and was not located. The quad bike was seized and two lurcher dogs, which were on the back of the vehicle, were seized and will be rehomed.

Please keep reporting hare coursing to police as the intelligence from you is crucial for us when we plan our patrols and targeted operational activity.

It's important to remember never to approach the people involved in this type of activity - your safety is our priority.

If it is safe to do so, obtain any video footage or photos, and provide as much information to the police as you can when you report including:

- Are the suspect/s alone or in a group?
- Do they have equipment with them?
- Do they have dogs or firearms with them? What type of dogs?
- Where are they going - Direction of travel if leaving/just left?
- Where have they been?
- What do they look like?
- How many vehicles, what are the number plates and vehicle models or any distinctive damage/marks visible?
- Any damage caused to fence/gates/fields?
- Name of landowner
- Has there been any intimidation of the landowner/farmer/agent?

POLICE LAUNCH 'BOBBI' - THE NEW AI POWERED VIRTUAL POLICE ASSISTANT

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police have become the first forces in the country to trial a pioneering new way to contact police.

[Bobbi the AI Virtual Assistant](#) has been created to answer frequently asked, non-emergency questions that come in to the police.

This is the first time this technology has been used in UK policing and offers an additional service, alongside our online forms, telephone lines and front counters, for those who prefer to use a virtual assistant to ask questions and seek help or advice. You cannot use the technology to report a crime or as an alternative to the emergency 999 line.

Bobbi has been tested by over 200 people, including representatives from victim care groups and independent scrutiny panel members.

Bobbi uses closed-source information to provide advice or point you in the right direction for a variety of police-related topics. Closed-source means that all the information Bobbi uses has been provided by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police.

The information used by the AI Virtual Assistant to make suggestions and recommendations is the same information referenced by our Call Handlers and Digital Desk Operators

to support them in answering these questions. Any data you share during your chat will remain confidential and will not be used outside of our forces.

If Bobbi is unable to answer your question or if you specify that you want to speak to a person, your chat will be directed to one of our Digital Desk operators - who are all real people.

Any misuse of the technology will draw Digital Desk operators away from dealing with real incidents and issues.

Chief Superintendent Simon Dodds said: "This is a really exciting time for us as we trial this technology in policing. Contact into the police increases year-on-year, online and over the phone, and it is important that the valuable skillset of our Call Handlers and Digital Desk Operators is spent on emergencies and complex, sensitive issues.

"Empathy, common sense and that intangible gut instinct are some of the many human skills that need to guide our interactions with the public, particularly in their time of need.

"By providing quick responses to commonly asked, non-emergency questions, Bobbi will enhance our service to our communities, ensuring that every member of the public can get the help they need, whenever they need it."

WANT TO STAY INFORMED? REGISTER FOR HAMPSHIRE ALERTS

As a local resident, you can play a key role in helping us to prevent and detect crime in rural areas.

By signing up to Hampshire Alerts, you will receive timely updates covering crime prevention advice, crime alerts and witness appeals for incidents.

[Click here to sign up to receive regular Hampshire Alerts](#)

It is your way of being kept informed of what we're doing in the community, allowing us to keep the communities of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight safe.

You can also tell us what issues matter most to you by completing our 'Let's Talk' survey here: <https://survey.hampshirealert.co.uk/>

COUNTRY WATCH

RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE



Insp Cath MacDonald
07909 770242



Sgt Kev Pearson
07392 314285



Sgt Michael Cork

Want to speak to a rural officer in your area? See the map below for your local contact. **Please note – these mobile numbers must not be used to report crime. Phone 101 to make a report. Dial 999 in an emergency or if a crime is in progress.**

PC David Bustin

PC Claire Goudie

PC Oliver Brown

Special Constable Alex Corbishley



PC Will Butcher
07775 542982



PC Kris Stephens
07929 868068

Police Staff Investigator Fiona Penny



PC Nick Atkins
07554 775466

Special Constable Simon Galliar

Police Staff Investigator Chloe Wilmott

Special Sergeant Phillips
07795 476662



Hazel Cross
Country Watch Coordinator
07799 587691

Bishop's Waltham



PC Mark Webb
07392 314427

Lyndhurst

Special Constable Phil Keeling
07392 289634

Isle of Wight



PC Rob Power
07966 109503

PC Sam Chapman
07392 314268

PC Liz Clapp

PCSO Karen Allen

PCSO Justin Keefe

Receive FREE crime and community information about where you live



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT
CONSTABULARY

Register at www.hampshirecountrywatch.co.uk