

Tackling Rural Crime Together - March 2016



A few weeks ago we had one of our rural action group meetings. We only hold them a couple of times a year at the moment, and advertise them via the Thames Valley Alert. It's an opportunity if you can spare the time, to meet local neighbourhood officers and managers – and to make sure that we know what your priorities and concerns are. Some of the feedback indicated that a number of you feel as if our working together is slowly going in the right direction, and that you feel that some police officers now have a better understanding of the impact of the crime that you suffer – and you have a better understanding of the reach of the police service in dealing with these concerns. We don't always get it right – but I can promise we will continue to try!! If you are available for the next meeting, please try to come along, but in the meantime the usual methods of contact will also enable us to monitor and deal with your concerns.

In the last newsletter I mentioned that I was concerned that we were losing some intelligence and information due to messages being left on officers mobile phones when they were off duty or on holiday. On the back of that, hopefully we have found an additional method for you to provide us with information: we have set up an email address that you can use to send us information or intelligence about rural crime and activity. The email address is ruralcrimespotterswb@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk DO NOT use this to report a crime – still use 101 or 999. This email will give you a direct route to the NH team and the intelligence team. The NH team will be present at various events throughout the year – we will always send out details on TV Alert.

If you feel that you would benefit from a crime reduction survey, then please contact the NH team on 101 or via email, and we can come and assess your property to help identify any potential weak spots, and advise on how these can be strengthened to reduce the chance of you being a victim of crime, or to help us identify offenders if anything should happen.

Although it will never feel like it if you have been a victim of crime this year, West Berkshire is one of very few police areas in Thames Valley who have continued to see a reduction in crime. We will continue with your help to translate that into a reduction in crime in the rural community, and for rural businesses.

Thank you for your ongoing feedback and support – especially to those of you who are out there with us at 3 am in the wind and rain on one of our operations, but also to those who play their part by providing us with information on suspicious activity or reporting incidents and crimes.

Lindsey Finch, Chief Inspector, West Berkshire Police Area Deputy Commander

Success in the Fight against Rural Crime

Here is an update on some of the successes since the last newsletter.

In June 2015, a 42 year-old male was charged with theft of vehicle offences. Paul Behnke, of no fixed-abode, was charged on Monday 29th June with one count of theft of a motor vehicle and one count of going equipped (having items on him that could be used to commit a crime) for theft of a motor vehicle.

The charge related to an incident on the same day in which two tractors were removed from a business site in Stanmore Road, East Ilsley. A JCB had been used to destroy fencing and he was found in possession of articles including a tracker blocking device and keys for the tractors.

Mr Behnke appeared at Reading Magistrates Court on the 27th July.

In August 2015 a River Keeper reported that a number of males were poaching fish from private land on the A4 Bath Road at Hungerford. Police attended the incident and searched several people who were in possession of fish and



rods. All the fish, rods and fishing equipment was confiscated and a thirty-two year-old male was reported to the Environment Agency on suspicion of poaching and for not having a licence.

(photo www.lochlomondangling.com)

In August 2015, Police were called to an incident in a field belonging to a utility company in Moor Lane, Newbury. A 21 year-old male had been spotted in possession of a rabbit and traps. He was reported and given a caution under Section 30 of the Games Act 1831 for poaching.

In November, police were called with regards to hare coursers who had been spotted with Lurcher dogs in the Common Hill area of Englefield. Two young males were arrested.

A male aged 21 years from Banbury and a boy aged 15 from Grazeley were arrested on the 10th December on suspicion of day poaching and were released on police bail for further enquiries.



Operation Festive and other Operation Updates

Between July 2015 and January 2016 there were five late night Operation Farthings, involving spotters, which were carried out either side of the M4 concentrating on Eastbury, East Garston and the Lambourn areas. Some of the operations were run jointly with the Faringdon Neighbourhood Police teams. Whilst there were no arrests during these operations a number of stop checks were carried out and it was a good opportunity to gather intelligence.

Thames Valley Police carried out a rural crime operation, Operation Festive, in West Berkshire between 6pm on the 14th November 2015 and 3am on the 15th November. The operation involved ten local civilian spotters working alongside the Hungerford Neighbourhood Police Team and officers from Farringdon, Oxfordshire. During the operation, two separate vehicles were spotted on farm land. However the vehicles made off from the police and went off-road to avoid being stopped.

West Berkshire Police Officers took part in Operation Flax which ran from 30th November to the 13th December 2015. More than 40 local officers took part in the two week



operation which targeted rural crime in the area.

Officers spent an additional 215 hours in the rural community and during some phases of the operation were joined by local 'spotters' looking out for suspicious activity.

During the operation, 28 suspicious

vehicles were stop checked by the police which resulted in:-



- 12 people being searched
 - 4 people being issued with cannabis warnings
 - 1 vehicle being seized for having no insurance/tax and the driver being reported for summons
 - Another driver being reported for no insurance
 - 4 'Section 59' warnings were issued to people for carrying out illegal off-roading
 - 5 people were arrested, including 3 arrested for burglary non-dwelling and 2 for hare coursing. All are currently on bail
- 5 intelligence reports were submitted.

Further, twenty six members of the rural community were visited on engagement visits and 98% of those spoken too said they had no issues to report

During January the Neighbourhood Police Team carried out an illegal off-road operation in the Farnborough and Bucklebury areas. The team were joined by the West Berkshire Rights of Way Officer and a spotter, although no vehicles were seen during the operation. However, Thames Valley Police is continuing to work with West Berkshire Council who have erected a number of bollards and signs at several restricted by-ways.

Lastly, a three day joint operation

was carried out with officers from Farringdon around the Lambourn area, centring on stables. Twenty seven stables were identified and patrolled over a couple of days and several vehicle stop checks were carried out. One vehicle stopped held two males who had previously been connected to poaching and burglary dwellings. Whilst no offences had been committed the intelligence was noted.

Please can we remind you to continue to call in suspicious incidents to the 24-hour Police Enquiry Centre on 101 and make use of the text alert to look out for specific people and vehicles? Your information helps us to build a picture and identify where we should be running rural operations next.

If you have any information about rural crime or see anything suspicious please contact the police via the 24-hour non-emergency Thames Valley Enquiry Centre on 101.



If you do not want to call 101, you can also pass on any intelligence or information that is **not urgent** to the following e-mail address that is monitored on a regular basis:- rural-crimespotterswb@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

If you don't want to speak directly to the police, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Deputy LPA Commander Lindsey Finch
West Berkshire Local Policing Area



New Initiatives/Approaches

West Berkshire Local Policing Area is always keen to implement new ideas in order to help combat rural crime. Here are some of the things that they have instigated or we are looking into:-

Stop the Thief

Last newsletter we told you about our new scheme for the rural community 'Stop that Thief'. The scheme allows landowners to loan security equipment, free of charge, from a specially formed committee, to prevent them from becoming victims of crime. At the end of the agreed time they can either return the equipment or purchase it at a discounted price. The scheme is now up and running and so far three landowners have purchased the equipment that was loaned to them and two more are considering buying the equipment.

Raves



We informed you that Thames valley Police were carrying out proactive prevention work around raves including visiting previous rave sites and conducting surveys with the landowner as well as identifying

www.telegraph.co.uk

possible rave organisers and issuing them with warning letters. We are pleased to announce that there were no raves in West Berkshire reported last year!

Vulnerable Location Scheme

In the last newsletter we also told you about the Vulnerable Location Scheme (VLS), designed to identify repeat victims and locations of crime in order to take proactive steps to prevent further offences being committed. The scheme is run on a voluntary basis with the victim/landowner working together with the police and supporting agencies; and will involve measures such as target hardening after carrying out a review of security measures.

Since the scheme started in October 2014, 85 locations have been placed on the scheme and approximately 33 locations have had a detailed crime reduction survey carried out.

Rural Action Group (RAG)

The Neighbourhood Police Team has set up a Rural Action Group (RAG) for West Berkshire. This problem solving group, made up of police and partners including West Berkshire Council and local rural businesses and landowners, the last meeting was held on the 27th January at Bucklebury Farm Park where the different crime reduction initiatives and schemes were discussed as well as a talk given on flytipping and on fishery and enforcement.

Police Open Day—August



The Neighbourhood Police Team hosted a Country Watch stand at the Police Open Day at Sulhamstead Police Training College in August 2015. At least 250 people visited the stand and we were able to provide crime reduction advice

to residents and local landowners.



Royal Berkshire County Show- September

Thames Valley Police West Berkshire, along with officers from Loddon Valley and South Oxfordshire, hosted a stand at the Royal County of Berkshire Show during the weekend of the 19th/20th September and were blessed with sunshine during the two days which meant there was a good turnout for the show.



The Neighbourhood Police Teams were there offering crime reduction advice to farmers and landowners as well as home safety advice to all other visitors. Once again we had the police tractor and a wildlife crime exhibition and ran a number

of competitions for visitors including a colouring competition, some of the entries and prizes are shown in the attached picture. Three new members were signed up to Country Watch and 121 people were signed up to the Thames Valley Alerts.



Theft of Horse Medication and Tack



unique serial number register it as above at www.immobilise.com

- Take a picture of your tack so that it can be easily identified if stolen
- Make sure the tack room is strongly constructed and the access door is strong and secured with a sturdy lock.
- Consider storing your tack inside locked boxes or on saddle racks that have built in locks.
- The yard should adopt a security code of practice, locking the door when not in use.

Historically there is usually an increase in theft horse medication and tack around April/May time. However, since the New Year we have already had a few incidents reported to Thames Valley Police.

Below is some crime reduction advice to help protect your property.-.

Medicines:

- Make sure all medicines are stored in a locked cabinet, preferably in a locked building
- Consider marking your packs of horse medication with a unique serial number and then registering it for free on the National Property Register at www.immobilise.com Remember to report it if it is stolen!

Tack:



- Mark your tack! If you would like your tack marked please contact the Bucklebury and Downlands Neighbourhood Police Team by calling the Police Enquiry Centre on 101 or e-mail: BuckleburyandDownlandsNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk
- If your tack is marked with a



Report any suspicious persons or vehicles seen in the yard immediately by calling the 24-hour non-emergency Police Enquiry Centre on 101 or dial 999 in an emergency.

Wildlife Crime Awareness Month



October 2015 was Wildlife Crime Awareness month and the Rural Police Team took part in a number of events including:-

A Rod Licence Enforcement Day, although no offences took place.

A talk on Wildlife Crime at Oxford University, and hosting a stand in Northbrook Street, Newbury, to educate people on Wildlife Crime, with partners from the RSPCA and the Environment Agency.

If you think there has been a wildlife crime offence, you can contact the Police, Natural England or your local Wildlife Trust. The West Berkshire Wildlife Crime Officer is PC Kirsten Goodfield who can be contacted on by calling the Police Enquiry Centre on 101. If a wildlife crime is about to be committed dial 999.

When Reporting a Wildlife Crime

Consider the following:-

- Is the suspect alone or in a group?
- Are they trespassing?
- Do they have equipment with them?
- Do they have dogs or firearms with them?
- Where are they going?
- Where have they been?
- What do they look like?
- Have they any vehicles?
- What are the number plates and vehicle models?
- Can you safely get a photograph?

