



**Report from the
Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys
To the
Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Panel**

Rural Crime

February 2020

Introduction

The area served by Dyfed-Powys Police is geographically the largest police force area in England and Wales covering 52% of the landmass of Wales: It is predominately a rural area, with a few localised areas of dense urban population.

Within the 2017-21 Police and Crime Plan, the Commissioner set out his intention to work closely with Dyfed-Powys Police and partners to develop a better understand rural and wildlife crime and the impact of this on our rural communities.

The Commissioner made a commitment to working with rural communities, and both the Commissioner and Chief Constable committed fully to understanding the needs and requirements of their rural and farming communities.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate progress made to date.

National Rural Crime Picture

In 2018, the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) produced the 'Rural Affairs Strategy 2018-2021', in which they state that "*Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs form a significant part of policing. The types of rural crimes seen across the UK vary from all types of farm crime to fly tipping.*"¹

The Rural Affairs Strategy indicates that there has been as rise in rural crime (1) due to a fall in the number of farms and the collapse of the rural close-knit communities, and (2) that "*modern transport links now enable thieves to steal farm machinery and move it to mainland Europe in a matter of hours*"².

The 6 'Operational Rural Affairs Priorities' noted in the Rural Affairs Strategy are:

- (1) Farm machinery, plant and vehicle theft;
- (2) Livestock offences;
- (3) Fuel theft;
- (4) Equine crime;
- (5) Fly tipping; and
- (6) Poaching³.

The Strategy also recognises that "*police forces also face regional and local variations in rural crime*"⁴. This could perhaps explain why there does not appear

¹Rural Affairs Strategy, page 3

²Rural Affairs Strategy, page 3

³Rural Affairs Strategy, page 8

⁴Rural Affairs Strategy, page 3

to be a national definition adopted by all police forces; some have developed their own definition, whilst others have not.

Indeed, the National Rural Crime Network states, *"we feel a tightly-defined definition may be counterproductive as it would run the risk of excluding some crime types. We are therefore concerned with all crime and anti-social behaviour occurring in rural areas."*⁵

Dyfed-Powys Police Rural Crime Picture

In 2017, after consultation with the public and following research undertaken in partnership with Aberystwyth University, the [Dyfed-Powys Rural Crime Strategy](#) was renewed. The Commissioner and Chief Constable launched the Strategy at the Winter Fair in Llanellwedd on 27 November 2017.

The Strategy, which covers the period of 2017-2021, does not provide a definition for the term 'Rural Crime' – an all-Wales decision – but it does highlight and explain the many challenges and areas to be considered when policing crime in rural areas: Farm and agricultural crime, heritage crime, wildlife crime, business and food crime, protecting vulnerable people, rural isolation, tourism, road safety, and serious and organised crime. It therefore covers more of a variety of challenges than the NPCC's Rural Affairs Strategy. Dyfed-Powys Police are aware of nationally-set priorities, such as those within the NPCC's Rural Affairs Strategy, but local priorities are also set.

The Dyfed-Powys Rural Crime Strategy supports the priorities set out in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, with a clear focus on responding to the above challenges through prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance.

Reporting on its 2018/19 Inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police, HMICFRS identified rural policing as an area where the Force has clear future plans, in its Rural Crime Strategy and Rural Crime Teams.

Each member of the Rural Crime Teams received specialist training to enable them to effectively police rural crime and deal with rural challenges. Four Police Constables and six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) from across the Force area currently make up the four Rural Crime Teams. They are line managed by the Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant in their area, and work closely with their local Neighbourhood Policing Teams to provide regular contact with their rural communities.

Due to the lack of definition of 'rural crime', it is difficult to quantify rural incidents dealt with by the Rural Crime Teams. Having said that, the Rural

⁵<https://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/why/rural-crime/>

Crime Teams are able to review all incidents tagged to them on an in-house IT system. Linked to this system, they are then able to access performance statistics on their 'Farm', 'Wildlife' and 'Other' rural incidents. At the time of writing (11 February 2020), 2,677 incidents classed as 'Farm', 'Wildlife' and 'Other' had been dealt with by the Rural Crime Teams since February 2019, when the in-house system was developed. Incidents classed as 'Other' include off-roading in forestry, heritage crime, suspicious vehicles/scrap metal, mental health/isolation, and multi-agency calls i.e. RSPCA assistance calls.

Given the obvious complexity of rural crime, partnership work is vital, and joint-working between the four Welsh forces is essential in tackling rural crime and the impact it has on the farming community. It has successfully proven to provide a platform for shared knowledge as well as the capability for cross-border police operations targeting rural crime. Both North Wales and Gwent Police have dedicated Rural Crime Teams. South Wales, arguably the least rural Welsh force, does not have a dedicated Rural Crime Team, but does target rural crime.

As well as working with other forces, the Rural Crime teams work closely with partners such as Natural Resources Wales, and regularly attend events within their communities in order to engage with residents of rural areas and discuss local matters. They also have a strong presence on social media; sharing information, appealing for information and providing updates to their local communities. They appear to be well established within the communities they serve, and positive news stories linked to their work regularly appear in the press and on social media.

On a national level, they partake in the National Rural Crime Day / Week of Action every year, and are kept abreast of important national issues.

The Rural Crime Strategy has been implemented and the Rural Crime Teams appear to be respected and have good standing in their local areas. Therefore, now may be an opportune time to take stock of where Dyfed-Powys Police is with this area of police work.

The Force is already taking steps to evaluate aspects of policing rural crime. For example, the Chief Inspector leading on Rural Crime has been asked to bring the Rural Crime Officers together, to get their feedback on how they believe they are working, and to evaluate the current process.

The Superintendent leading on Rural Crime recently attended a partnership meeting with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. The Minister for Rural Affairs expressed interest in how the four Welsh forces approach rural crime, and discussions were held around piloting a post of All-Wales Coordinator for policing rural crime.

The Commissioner's Office will continue to monitor Dyfed-Powys Police's approach to policing rural crime and any developments in this area.

Work of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Oversight and independent assurance

One way in which the Commissioner and his team monitor and maintain oversight of the Force's work is via attendance at numerous Governance Groups.

There is no longer one specific meeting that discusses rural crime; as was established by the Rural Crime Strategy. Instead, it is covered within the Neighbourhood Governance Policing Board, where rural policing activity is discussed and evaluated.

By attending the Neighbourhood Policing Governance Board, Officers within the OPCC are privy to discussions on current and future plans in relation to policing rural crime. This information is brought back to the PCC so that he remains abreast of all updates and discussions.

Engagement Activity and Partnership Working

Clearly set out within the Police and Crime Plan is the Commissioner's intention to work with both the police and partners to develop a better understanding of our rural communities and to deliver a policing service suitable to their needs.

Within the Rural Crime Strategy, the Commissioner emphasises that: *"At the heart of understanding the full impact that rural crime carries, will be open and honest dialogue with victims such as residents, farmers and agricultural businesses."*

The Commissioner has hosted/attended events and commissioned consultations based on rural crime, in order to develop this understanding, and to provide local communities with important information on matters such as crime prevention and services available to them.

Partnership working has proven vital in this activity, and below are just some examples of the engagement activity which has or is soon to take place.

Rural Crime Study

The Commissioner's Office worked alongside Aberystwyth University researchers to launch the Rural Crime Study in 2017. The study asked for details about farms and farmers' experiences of farm-related crimes, and sought views on police attitude towards thefts from farms and their trust in their local communities, the police and the legal system. Key findings suggested that whilst

there was general satisfaction with Dyfed-Powys Police, there was a perception that the investigation and prosecution of farm and rural crime was not being adequately and/or appropriately resourced. Initiatives modelled on other force areas, such as dedicated rural crime officers with specialist knowledge were welcomed. These findings informed the renewal of the Dyfed-Powys Rural Crime Strategy.

In 2019, the Commissioner funded a follow-up study by the researchers at Aberystwyth University, where farmers and other key stakeholders were asked to share their experiences of farm-related crime, police attitudes towards farm crime, and the effectiveness of crime prevention measures in rural areas. This study was launched at the 2019 Royal Welsh Show. The results of which will be presented to attendees at the Commissioner's Rural Crime Conference on 6 March 2020.

Rural Crime Forum

At the Royal Welsh Show in 2018, the Commissioner welcomed a panel of experts to his Rural Crime Forum, which sought to consider whether enough is being done to tackle rural crime.

The panel consisted of six members from key stakeholders and commentators, including Natural Resources Wales, North Wales Police, Farmers Union of Wales, Chief Constable Mark Collins of Dyfed-Powys Police, the Wales lead for Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs, Gwent Police, and the veteran agriculture broadcaster and journalist, Anna Jones.

The audience used the opportunity to raise pertinent questions, with the main topics including fly tipping, modern slavery and specifically County Lines, which sees drug gangs exploiting young and vulnerable people in rural areas.

At the time, the Commissioner stated: *"The Rural Crime Forum is an excellent opportunity to listen to the concerns of the agricultural and rural community, and to gain a true insight into the complexities of rural crime here in Dyfed-Powys and the rest of Wales."*

Rural Crime Event, Carmarthen Mart

In October 2018, the Commissioner was represented at a Rural Crime Event in Carmarthen Mart, where the focus was on mental health in rural settings. It was an opportunity to start building relationships with organisations such as Tir Dewi (who provide help and support for farmers in crisis across West Wales), DPJ Foundation (who support people in rural communities with mental ill-health, especially men in the agricultural sector) and RABI (financial support to farming people in hardship of all ages).

Rural Crime Prevention Event

In April 2019, the Commissioner attended the 'Rural Crime Prevention Event' in Whitland where he engaged with partners and members of the public on crime prevention. The Commissioner also took the opportunity to spread the message of crime prevention and rural crime issues further by being interviewed from the event by Aled Rhys Jones from Radio Cymru.

Farmers Union Wales Event

In May 2019, the Commissioner attended an evening arranged by Councillor Lloyd Edwards and members of the Police and Crime Panel, at the Moody Cow in Llwynycelyn. The event was chaired by Councillor Alun Lloyd Jones, and the Commissioner sat on a Panel with Member of Parliament for Ceredigion, Ben Lake and Chief Constable Mark Collins. The Force's Rural Crime Team Officers were also present, and it was a great opportunity to discuss rural crime with members of the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW).

No Cold Calling Area Initiative Launch

In October 2019, the Commissioner attended the launch of a new cold calling initiative at a local farm in Carmarthenshire. The Rural Crime Team had linked in with Trading Standards to ensure that farms be included under 'cold calling' legislation: If anyone is seen coming to farm property uninvited, where the 'No Cold Calling Area' sign is displayed, they can be reported to the police and action could be taken against them. The hope is that the signs, and this knowledge, will stop criminals attending farms to acquire information on farm equipment present etc., and therefore prevent the theft of said equipment. The Commissioner was instrumental in spreading this message on crime prevention.

Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward

Carmarthenshire County Council's Executive Board has previously unveiled its aspirations to regenerate its rural communities - strengthening local economies, creating jobs and business opportunities and protecting the Welsh language. The Commissioner has been supportive of Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward strategy led by Cllr. Cefin Campbell and in October 2019, the Commissioner was represented at an event where the task force launched the Rural Affairs Task Group Report; an opportunity to hear more on the task force's findings. The Commissioner welcomes any future co-operation with the task force to meet objectives for the area.

Rural Crime Conference

On 6 March 2020, the Commissioner will host his annual St. David's Day Conference. This year, the focus is policing in a rural community. Attendees will

hear inputs on a number of topics such as the challenges of policing in rural and isolated communities, and the challenges of supporting an aging rural population. They will also hear from the founder of the DPJ Foundation, a charity based in Pembrokeshire to support those in rural communities and in agriculture with mental health problems and Aberystwyth University on the results of their second Rural Crime Study with the Commissioner.

Community Link

Further information on the above-listed Commissioner's engagement activities can be found in his Newsletter, Community Link, on the Commissioner's [website](#).

Through the Community Link, the Commissioner has also provided a number of updates specifically linked to rural crime. It is important to the Commissioner that the public are kept informed on what is happening in their local area.

Central Government funding

The Commissioner has taken steps to ensure that the Government considers the rurality of the Dyfed-Powys area when decisions are being made on police funding. For example, in December 2018, together with the Chief Constable, the Commissioner travelled to London to meet with MPs to discuss the future of funding of Dyfed-Powys Police, to ensure rural areas are not forgotten when funding levels were being set.

Similarly, during 2019, he lobbied Welsh Government on the issue alongside local MPs / AMs, and as recently as January 2020, met with the new Secretary of State to discuss the matter.

Grant funding

The Commissioner has also provided funding through his office to assist the police and partners in dealing with crime in rural areas, and its associated problems.

Rural Crime Vehicle for Powys

In 2019, the Commissioner approved £25,000 of funding for an additional 4 x 4 vehicle for the Rural Crime Team in Powys. Given the vast area covered by Powys' Rural Crime Team, the Commissioner agreed that an additional vehicle for the county would allow the Team to cover their community more efficiently and effectively.

Age Cymru

The Commissioner has twice provided funding for Age Cymru Projects focusing on rural communities; £5,000 for Age Cymru Powys in 2016, and £4,970 for a project covering Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire in 2017/18.

This 2016 funding was to help Age Cymru Powys work more closely with the police, enabling officers to better identify those who may particularly vulnerable or isolated, while the 2017/18 funding was used to provide older people with information about online and crime prevention.

Conclusion

Both the Commissioner and Dyfed-Powys Police have made much positive progress in their commitment to working with rural communities in order to fully understand their needs and requirements.

The significant range of engagement activities and partnership working evidenced in this report ensures that the Commissioner and the police are kept up to date with the matters experienced in the more rural areas of the force. There is evidence that the force are already taking steps to evaluate where they are in terms of effectively policing rural crime and other rural challenges faced by our local communities, which is positive and healthy as the Strategy was established over two years ago.

There is also evidence that the Commissioner continues to prioritise and be involved in this area of work, as well as to continue monitoring the force's activities and progress in this field.