

Countryside
Alliance



Police and Crime Commissioner Manifesto 2024



The countryside is a beautiful place to live in and offers a lifestyle to which many aspire. However, crime has become an increasing problem for rural communities over the past few years, second only in importance to the National Health Service. It is not just the experience of crime but also the rising fear of crime that needs to be recognised.

While there is increasing awareness in Westminster of the problem, this is often not felt by the communities that live and work in the countryside nor reflected in government policies. 50% of people who responded to our 2023 Rural Crime Survey told us they don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 35% said they have had a crime committed against them in the past 12 months.

The crimes recorded as being most frequently committed in rural areas include fly-tipping, agricultural machinery theft, hare poaching and trespass (trespass is not in itself criminal unless aggravated), with respondents wanting the police to prioritise tackling these crimes.

Additionally, according to the survey, there is a serious problem of crime being underreported in rural areas. Almost a third of crimes committed against those living in the countryside were not reported. Those surveyed felt it was a waste of time to report it and the police would not be able to do anything. This is why 50% of people don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 58% of people think rural policing has not improved since Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012.

Our Rural Crime Survey results infer that we have a rural population simply putting up with the crime they experience and making do as best they can. There is often no escape from the effects of rural crime, with the fear of crime doing just as much damage as the crimes that are committed.

Good rural policing is about far more than the number of police officers on the ground. If we truly want to tackle rural crime, we must form effective partnerships between the police, rural communities and other authorities to ensure that the needs of our rural communities are truly understood and that the availability of services matches those needs.

Crime is a key issue for rural communities. Police and Crime Commissioners must recognise that tackling crime and increasing police visibility is a priority for the rural electorate.



The Countryside Alliance calls upon Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to:



1. Overhaul the way police prioritise rural crime

There is clear evidence that much rural crime meets the criteria for being serious and organised. However, current guidelines on police priorities and responses do not give rural crime the necessary prominence. We are calling for the College of Policing to review and update its Threat, Harm and Investigation guidelines (THRIVE) to reflect the growing serious and organised element of rural criminality and its impact on rural communities.



2. Support dedicated rural crime teams

A single point of contact in the community through rural crime teams adds confidence that reported crimes will be investigated, with the full impact on the rural community understood. Many forces have already set up a dedicated team but PCCs must ensure the funding for them continues. If there is no dedicated team, PCCs should provide their full support and funding for one to be set up.



3. Ensure the police take rural crime seriously

50% of people don't think the police take rural crime seriously and 58% of people think rural policing has not improved since Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012. The figures demonstrate a feeling within rural communities that the police cannot do anything about many crimes. PCCs can ensure that police not only understand rural communities but also take action to reassure those who live and work in the countryside.



4. Rebuild trust between rural communities and the police

PCCs have a key role in rebuilding trust and focusing police on rural crime via their Police and Crime Plan, but if they are serious about developing effective strategies to combat rural crime that requires collaboration between communities and the police. This includes working with groups such as Farm Watch and Neighbourhood Watch, using these invaluable community resources to complement policing and crime prevention initiatives.



5. Encourage rural communities to report rural crime

Non-reporting is a serious problem. Those surveyed by the Countryside Alliance felt either it was a waste of their time to report crime or the police would not be able to do anything. It should be made easier for people to report crimes, and when they are reported, they must be taken seriously. Working with their force and local communities, PCCs can ensure the message of "reporting every crime" is understood by all communities and acted upon.



6. Target police resources better

Resources are routinely focused on areas that have the greatest 'threat, risk and harm'. Rural communities come in all shapes and sizes and their needs vary greatly from one area to the next. Particular challenges also exist in tackling crimes that are unique to rural areas. Crime, crime prevention, community safety and support services in the countryside must be understood and viewed from a rural context. PCCs should get to know their communities, understand their needs, and match services and resources to them.

Key Facts



Rural theft cost the UK

£49.5m

in 2022, up 22.1% on the previous year.

(NFU Mutual)



Two thirds

of farmers have been affected by fly-tipping and clearing up costs the industry tens of millions of pounds a year.

(National Rural Crime Network)



Livestock theft costs

£2.7m

Livestock theft remains one of the costliest crimes to farming, a rise of 8.7% from 2022.

(NFU Mutual)



Crime is hugely underreported in rural areas with nearly

1 in 3

people not reporting they were a victim of crime.

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey 2023)



Sheep worrying has been reported as the most frequently occurring rural crime.

(National Sheep Association)



44%

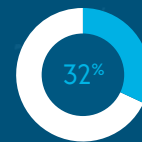
of people in rural areas have felt intimidated by criminality or criminals over the last year.

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey 2023)

Most commonly experienced crimes in rural areas:



Fly-tipping



Agricultural machinery theft



Trespass

(Countryside Alliance Rural Crime Survey 2023)

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