

Rural Matters



Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Winter 2022/23



In this issue:



**Kent
Police**



Fighting rural crime



Dog attack – ewes killed




Action against poaching

Plus the latest news on rural and environmental policing in Kent

Welcome to Rural Matters


Welcome to Rural Matters. See inside for the latest on the Kent Police Rural Task Force. There are now more officers countywide dedicated to tackling and preventing crime in the countryside. We've the latest news on how these officers, partners and colleagues are working to protect and support Kent's rural communities. Email your Rural Task Force team – rural.task.force@kent.police.uk

Rural Inspector



Inspector
Tom Pooley
07976 765676

Rural Sergeant



Sergeant
Darren Walshaw
07870 252185

North Division – 07528 989095

- PC Paul Williams
- PC Adrian Goodsall
- PC Nathan Southern
- PC Marc Pennicott


West Division – 07580 236308

- PC Luke Jordan
- PC Tom Smith
- PC Nick Lingham
- PC Anna Verrall

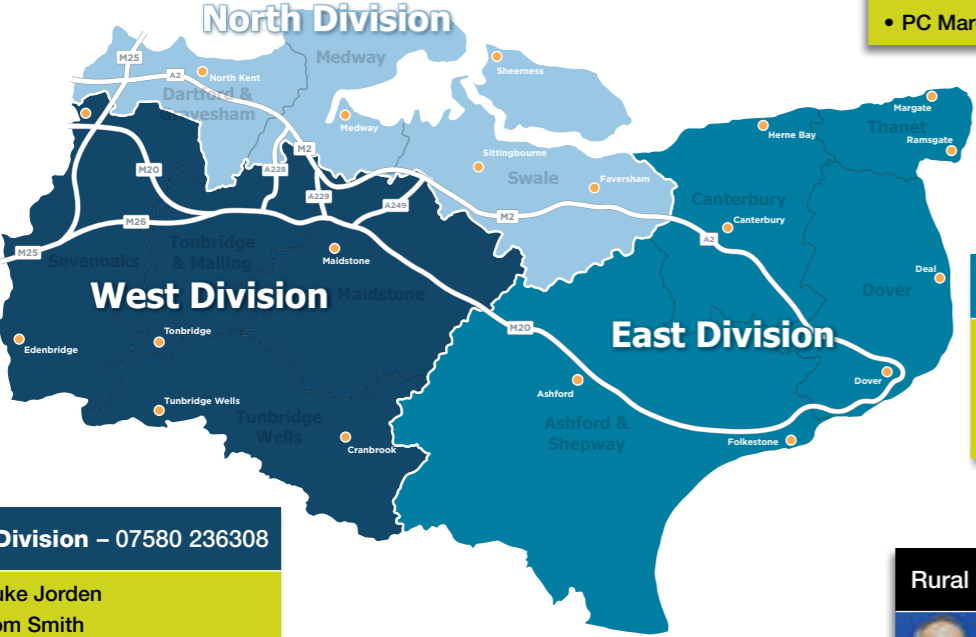
East Division – 07980 978202

- PC Matt Lehman
- PC Harry Callaghan
- PC Michael Sutton
- PC Amy White

Rural Crime Co-ordinator





Doug Robertson
07972 004578



More rural contact information, see back page.

Report non-urgent crime online

-  Go to www.kent.police.uk/report
-  Report a crime, incident or non-injury collision in minutes
-  Receive your confirmation email and reference number immediately

Anyone with information about suspected crime can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously by calling **0800 555 111** or using the anonymous online form.

Crimestoppers.
0800 555 111
100% anonymous. Always.



Twitter account

Your Rural Task Force PCs have a Twitter account [@KentPoliceRural](https://twitter.com/KentPoliceRural)

The team regularly Tweets updates on what they've been doing and any live incidents.

Follow for the latest news and information.



Latest news

Be vigilant against rural crime – officers work with communities to take action

The importance of sharing information, being alert to suspicious activity and keeping property secure are crucial in the fight against criminals who target rural communities.

Theft of high value farm equipment and vehicles; fraudsters targeting isolated and vulnerable people; illegal waste tipping; destruction of habitats and harm to wildlife or heritage sites and livestock worrying are some of the crimes dealt with by the Kent Police Rural Task Force.

The team is dedicated to working together with colleagues, partners and communities to take action against those exploiting rural locations and causing harm and financial loss.

In 2022 nationally there was an increase in the theft of high value farm equipment and fuel.

This included ATVs (All Terrain Vehicles); quad bikes, diggers, horse boxes, trailers and tractor satellite navigation equipment; heating oil and metal thefts including cabling and catalytic converters.

A proposed new Equipment Theft (Prevention) Bill, supported by the NFU and stakeholders, aims to strengthen laws against theft and resale of equipment.

National rural crime

operations, which the Rural Task Force is part of, include Operation Galileo and Seven Forces borderless action against hare coursing and poaching; Op Traverse dealing with illegal fishing and associated crime (working with the Environment Agency and South East Angling Trust) and ongoing targeted UK wide weeks of action against metal theft and road traffic offences.

The team also regularly work throughout the year with local councils around illegal waste carrying and fly tipping; farmers and landowners around livestock attacks; the RSPCA around animal welfare and cruelty and with Historic England on heritage site damage and law breaking.

Kent Police Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'The end of 2022 was a busy time for the RTF and Kent Police. We are continuing to receive reports of theft of machinery and we have seen an increase in this type of crime. I'd remind machinery owners to please take all precautions to secure their property, record all serial numbers, take photos and consider markings such as DNA solutions and tracker devices. These will help officers recover property if it is



stolen. The team work together and with other departments on localised operations to proactively combat and prevent this type of crime.'

He added: 'Livestock worrying continues to be reported. The RTF has several ongoing investigations making use of forensic evidence. Others have been resolved through Community Resolution, with the farmer being fully compensated for any loss. We have signage

available for any livestock owners who have footpaths near their grazing fields. The team works with other forces tackling Op Galileo offences – which continue to be reported in relation to all poaching offences, not just hare coursing. This is still very much under reported and I encourage people to report all incidents via 999 if in progress, 101 or online.'

Pregnant ewes killed in savage attack, see story page 5.

FarmWatch alerts – success grows

Since FarmWatch WhatsApp was launched membership has grown to 1,665.

By sharing information directly with Rural Task Force officers it enables them to act swiftly – resulting in stolen property being recovered and offenders stopped in their tracks.

In one recent example following a FarmWatch report of suspected hare coursing in

Stalisfield, patrols responded to find a Mercedes ML500 abandoned in a hedge with the keys in the ignition and engine running, with five lurcher dogs left roaming. The vehicle was seized and the dogs recovered. Sgt Walshaw said: 'Membership of FarmWatch has proved a great asset in sharing information between the RTF and local

community.' Anyone interested in joining their local group email the RTF at rural.task.force@kent.police.uk

Farm Watch WhatsApp is a tool to share information directly with the team and not to be used to report crime. Any crimes should be reported in the usual way; 999 if a crime is in progress or 101 and online if non-urgent.



Latest news

Rural Task Force joins community events

Rural Task Force officers regularly attend community events – from large agricultural shows to local matches.

They can share crime prevention advice and learn about local concerns. Recent events included the South of England Autumn Agricultural Show at Ardingly, where Kent officers attended along with Sussex and Surrey rural teams. Kent RTF officers were also at the North Kent &

Medway Ploughing Match and the East Kent Ploughing Match, meeting local farmers, landowners and stakeholders.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'The RTF also attended Swale's Annual Ploughing Match at Borden, Sittingbourne. Many farmers took the opportunity to talk to us and we received positive feedback about FarmWatch with several new members



joining.' Rural Inspector Tom Pooley, Sgt Walshaw and PC Nathan Southern have recently met with key stake holders and the NFU county advisor to discuss rural crime and other related issues.

Taking action against poaching

The Rural Task Force is continuing to investigate and take action against suspected poaching and hare coursing.

In November RTF officers investigated 72 reports of poaching, 14 reports of livestock worrying and 27 wildlife incidents.

Among 10 people arrested during the month was a man who already had a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) in place for previous poaching offences. He was charged to court with breaching the order.

Op Galileo is the national operation which targets hare coursing and poaching. Kent Rural Task Force officers also work under a borderless agreement with seven forces – Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Herefordshire,

Cambridge and Bedfordshire. The seven forces can work as one when exercising certain powers, including automatic number plate recognition and seizing dogs.

Rural Task Force Inspector Tom Pooley said: 'Last autumn saw very busy months for the team due largely to the increased number of poaching reports, which continue to be

a cause for concern across Kent and other rural counties. Not only does poaching involve cruelty to animals but it is also associated with a range of other criminal activities including theft, criminal damage, violence and intimidation. We will continue to work closely with farmers, landowners and partners to clamp down on this type of

offending, as well as all other illegal acts that threaten people's quality of life in rural areas. There have been reports of considerable damage to crops, gates and grassland, any information about those involved is valuable to the team.'

Report incidents via 999 if in progress, through 101 or online.

Recent incidents included:

- **Neats Marshes, Queenborough** – Dead rabbits, a catapult and small knife seized. Three people reported for poaching offences.
- **Payden Street, Lenham** – A man found with ball bearings and high-powered lamp. Served with a seven forces Op Galileo Community Protection Warning.
- **Stalisfield** – Abandoned Mercedes found in a hedge with five lurcher dogs roaming free. Vehicle seized and dogs recovered.
- **Marden** – Police Air Support spotted hare coursing in Marden. Patrols were sent and after a vehicle pursuit four men were arrested. Alleged offences included criminal damage, dangerous driving, theft of a motor vehicle and poaching.

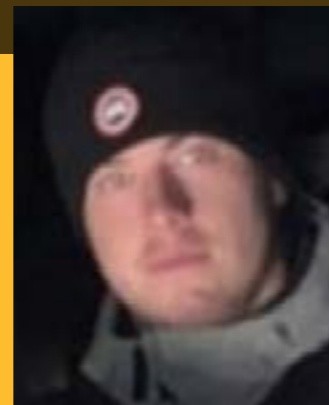
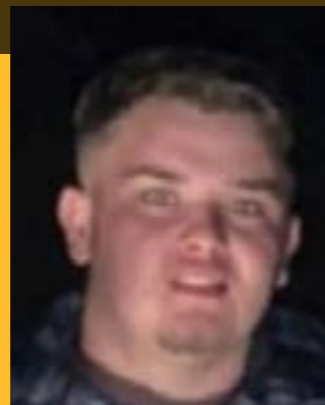
Unlawful killing of owl

The Rural Task Force is investigating the suspected killing of a tawny owl in Upchurch.

The incident is believed to have happened in October 2022. Officers have recently come into possession of images of two men they'd like to speak to. Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw

said: 'We suspect an owl was killed using catapults and are now issuing photographs of two people who may be able to assist with our enquiries.'

Anyone with information call 01634 792209 Rural Task Force reference 95-22 or Crimestoppers anonymously 0800 555 111 or via the website's online form.



Dog attack leaves 27 ewes and unborn lambs dead

In one of the worst cases of livestock worrying investigated by Kent Police, 27 ewes – all believed to be pregnant – were killed in a suspected dog attack between Christmas Eve and Boxing Day.

Officers are investigating the distressing incident in a field at Deerton Street, Teynham, near Sittingbourne, and are appealing for anyone with information or witnesses to come forward.

It has been reported that barking was heard in the area between 4pm and 5pm on Christmas Day.

Rural Task Force PC Marc Pennicott, said: 'This is possibly the worst livestock attack we have ever had. The sheep would have been petrified and

had no way of escaping.

'We believe they may have been attacked by one dog but cannot rule out that more dogs may have also been responsible. The farmer has not only suffered a financial loss due to this incident but animals have needlessly lost their lives. These dogs would have been covered in mud and returned home exhausted and we are committed to identifying their owners.'

'The sheep targeted were pregnant with twins or triplets and the remaining livestock have also been left vulnerable to a further attack, so it is extremely important that we find who is responsible for these dogs as quickly as possible.'



Are you a...

RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNER?



Please keep your dog on a lead.

'Worrying' livestock is a crime under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

If you are on agricultural land and a dog you own or are in charge of **attacks** or **chases** livestock in a way that may cause **injury, suffering** or **loss**, you could be **prosecuted, fined** and **ordered to pay compensation**.

If you see a dog worrying livestock, please call the police on **999**.

Under the Animals Act 1971, a person acting to **protect livestock** may be able to **kill** or **injure a dog**, without incurring any criminal or civil liability, if he or she believes it is worrying livestock.



Can you help?

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Kent Police on **01795 419119**, quoting reference 26-0510.

You can call **0800 555 111** or use the anonymous online form at **Crimestoppers-uk.org**.

Livestock attacks – signage available

The Rural Task Force has a number of other ongoing investigations into livestock worrying making use of forensic evidence – such as DNA – when animals have been attacked.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'The team has resolved other incidents by way of community resolution with the farmer being fully compensated for any loss. We have signage available for any livestock owners who have footpaths near their grazing fields.'



Thefts from rural post boxes – warning

Owners of rural post boxes are being warned to be alert to thieves who steal mail which could be used for fraud.

Many rural post boxes are situated at the end of drives or at farm or garden entrances.

There have been reports of stolen mail being collected by an unauthorised person who may use the contents to commit fraud offences such as ordering bank and credit cards or cloning the homeowner's identity. Owners are being urged to review security measures.

Lead theft from village school roof – man in court

A man has appeared in court in relation to theft of tiles and lead from a village school.

The materials were stolen from Bobbing Village School, Sittingbourne between 8 August and 17 August 2021.

Jimmy Smith, 25, of Juno Road, Sittingbourne was arrested and on 5 December 2022 at Maidstone Crown Court pleaded guilty to theft and burglary charges.

He denied a further charge of criminal damage at the school and pleaded not guilty to four other unrelated offences linked to thefts. He was bailed and a trial scheduled in April 2023.

Illegal waste operation – arrests after stolen van stopped

The Rural Task Force works regularly with local authorities through Operation Assist to check waste carriers are operating legally and to prevent fly tipping.

In a recent North Kent operation two men were arrested in a stolen van by Rural Task Force officers working with local authority enforcement teams from Dartford and Gravesham.

Patrols stopped a Ford Transit van on the A225 near Horton Kirby on 29 November 2022 and it was found to have false number plates and had been stolen from Leicester two months earlier.

A 20-year-old man from Kettering and 22-year-old man from Dartford were arrested on suspicion of theft. The former was also arrested on suspicion of burglaries and thefts in East Anglia.

A truck carrying garden waste was also stopped in High Road, Dartford and the driver given a fixed penalty notice for having no waste carrier's licence. The vehicle was seized as it had no road tax or valid test certificate.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'We're aware those drivers who remove garden, household and building waste without a valid carrier's licence are more than likely to be involved in fly-tipping. This blights communities, can pose a risk to the public and is costly to remove.'

'We'll continue these checks and those involved in waste disposal should ensure they have the correct documentation and their vehicle is roadworthy. I'd remind residents who hire a tradesperson for this type of task, they have a responsibility to check the person has a valid licence for the job.'

Another flatbed lorry

carrying waste in Watling Street was seized as it was untaxed and a further driver in Devonshire Road received a traffic offence report for failing to tax his vehicle.

Gravesham Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure, Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox said: 'We are pleased to be working with different agencies such as Kent Police to help find and prosecute those committing environmental crimes in our borough. If you get someone to dispose of rubbish, ensure they have a waste carrier's licence. Often those without a licence will fly-tip rubbish.'

'We take fly tipping seriously and do not tolerate it. As part of our Environmental Enforcement Strategy, we

will do everything we can to put a stop to it, as shown by our record so far since the Environmental Enforcement Team – created in September 2020 – with over 697 enforcements so far including pursuing prosecutions through the courts.' Leader of Dartford Council Jeremy Kite added: 'Op Assist continues to be an effective collaboration between local authorities and Kent Police to deter fly-tipping and illegal waste carriers both in the centre and in more rural areas. It's great to see the wider reaching consequences of this latest operation. By catching suspected criminals from other parts of the country, we're sending a warning that their illegal activity is not welcome in our borough.'



Truck without road tax seized

Cars seized and dangerous driving targeted in joint op

Dangerous motorists were stopped, uninsured vehicles seized and a suspected drug driver was arrested during partnership work in Ashford.

Officers from Kent Police's Roads Policing Unit, Community Policing Team, Rural Task Force and Special Constabulary worked with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and Ashford Borough Council on 2 December 2022, when 18 vehicles were stopped

near Mace Lane, with nine seized under the Road Traffic Act, due to lack of valid insurance or being untaxed.

Further vehicles were stopped elsewhere – with 24 drivers issued with Traffic Offence Reports for offences including speeding, using a mobile phone at the wheel and transporting insecure or excessive loads. Ashford Borough Council staff carried out checks on vehicles carrying waste. Three e-scooters were also seized.



The new forensic recovery dogs with their handlers

New forensic recovery dogs start work

Kent Police's dog section has three new recruits to the team.

Police Dogs Belle and Gigi, both cocker spaniels, and Dixon, a springer spaniel, with their handlers PC Lisa Riddle, PC Craig Whorlow and PC Ian Atkins are now trained forensic recovery dogs after completing an eight-week course.

They join the team of three other forensic recovery dogs and will work closely with Crime Scene Investigators to help search and locate forensic evidence such as blood.

Chief Inspector Craig West, of

Kent Police's Dog Section, said: 'Police dogs play a vital role in modern policing and work side-by-side with officers and staff to keep people safe and help bring offenders to justice.'

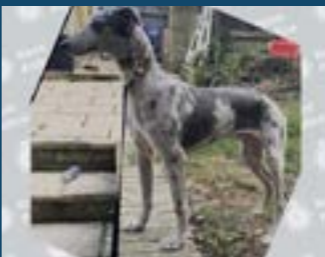
'Dogs like these use their extraordinary sense of smell to track down evidence at scenes of crime, or to help locate people who may be injured and in need of our assistance. We just could not carry out this type of work without them, which is one of the reasons why our police dogs are held in such high regard.'

Help find dogs stolen during burglary



Officers have released images of three dogs as part of an investigation into a reported burglary near Dover.

Between 3.30pm and 6.30pm on Thursday 29 December 2022, two whippets and a greyhound cross were



reportedly stolen from a house in Eythorne.

An investigation is underway and officers have released images of the dogs as part of an appeal.

Anyone who has seen or been offered the dogs for sale,



or has any other information, is urged to call Kent Police on 01843 222289 quoting reference 46/247641/22.

You can call **0800 555 111** or use the anonymous online form at **Crimestoppers-uk.org**.

You can use our online forms for reporting rural crimes including:



Poaching



Theft of farming or agricultural equipment



Livestock worrying

www.kent.police.uk/report

Partnerships

Rural team working with partners to protect rural communities



The team use their expertise to support Local Neighbourhood Policing Teams, PCSOs or core response officers. The team are all fully trained Wildlife Crime Officers.

Countryside Code

Remember

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as you found them
- Keep pets under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone



Key partners working with Kent Police to keep rural communities safe

Crime Rural Advisory Group

CRAG formed in 2012, brings together main rural stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union and Country Land & Business Association – representing a large percentage of land occupancy countywide.

web: www.btfpartnership.co.uk
email: michael.bax@btfpartnership.co.uk
phone: **Michael Bax 01233 740077**

Kent Association of Local Councils

KALC is a not for profit membership organisation serving member parish and town councils and parish meetings in Kent and Medway. It offers training, advice and services to member councils. KALC works with rural officers to disseminate information on their behalf, and to gather crime information from towns and parishes.

web: www.kentalc.gov.uk
email: kalc@kentalc.gov.uk
phone: **01304 820173**

National Farmers Union

The NFU champions British farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members. Around 70 per cent of full time farmers are NFU members. They aim to support Kent Police to engage with members' extensive local knowledge, working in partnership with CRAG and other stake holder organisations.

web: www.nfuonline.com
email: isobel.bretherton@nfu.org.uk
phone: **01730 711950**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service

KFRS is responsible for delivering fire and rescue services to more than 1.7 million people. Each year fire officers deal with around 16,500 incidents including road crashes, house and

barn fires and more than 2,400 non-fire rescues. KFRS works with the Kent Police, NFU, and CRAG to provide safety and risk reduction advice to support the agricultural business community.

web: www.kent.fire-uk.org
email: enquiries@kentfire-uk.org
phone: **01622 692121**

Historic England

Historic England is a public body which looks after England's historic environment. There are over 400,000 protected sites and buildings in England and Historic England works across a range of partnership to prevent the loss and damage to our shared cultural heritage. Former Kent police officer Mark Harrison advises the organisation and works closely with rural officers and CRAG.

web: www.historicengland.org.uk
email: southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk
phone: **01483 252020**

Country Land & Business Association

The CLA is the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales and has been safeguarding the interests of landowners, and those with an economic, social and environmental interest in rural land for more than 112 years. The CLA South East Office works closely with the Kent Police to help achieve these aims

web: www.cla.org.uk
email: southeast@cla.org.uk
phone: **01264 313434**

