



# Operation Randall

tackling rural crime  
Newsletter

Issue 31 | January 2023

 @RuralCrimeNfk

## Introduction

Happy New Year to you all. I hope you had a great festive period and had some down time with friends and family. During the festive period I have been assisting the larger team covering our drone responsibilities for the force, providing cover day and night.

At this time of year, we often get invited to several end of year meetings. In November I attended the NFU AGM and joined the County Farms AGM in December. Alongside that I was invited to a local NFU branch meeting at Diss. These are all fantastic opportunities for us to meet people in the community and for them to raise any concerns with us. It's important we listen to what may be causing unease within rural communities so we can look at how we can help, and where we can target our activities.

Let's look back at the last 12 months...

## Livestock Worrying and Theft of Fencing Units

Looking back at our records, we have investigated a considerable number of wildlife crimes this past year. One area in which we've investigated several crimes over the last 12 months has been offences against bats. On one occasion we received a report of a suspected disturbance of roosting bats in a church. We investigated the report and found the work was done under an appropriate licence and unlikely to have caused a

disturbance.

We had a similar job involving the reported destruction of roosting bats at a house and the question of whether the developers had applied for the correct licence. We worked with colleagues from Natural England to investigate and in this instance discovered the work was performed under the correct licence.

Unfortunately, on another two occasions this year, we have taken action when developers destroyed known bat roosts. In both cases, we issued Community Resolutions. Community Resolutions are a great way to resolve crimes and give back to the community, and in both these cases the offenders were asked to make significant donations to a local wildlife charity and install improvements for bats as part of the development. This should improve the prospects of the harmed species for the future.

For the first time last year we also investigated two reports of work damaging rivers where water voles were believed to be living. One of these incidents happened in a beck in the back of someone's garden, again the offender agreed to implement improvements to the beck to enhance it for the future and was asked to make a donation to a local wildlife charity via a Community Resolution. The other investigation, which remains ongoing, involves a much larger site with significant damage. I'll update you on this as soon as I can.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

PC Chris Shelley | [christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk](mailto:christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk) | 07900 407106

In addition, we investigated two breaches of licences issued by Natural England. One involved egg-pricking and the eggs in question were from Grey Lag Geese. Egg-pricking is allowed under licence but had not been performed under licence in this instance, so an offence had been committed.

The other case involved a person who had a license to shoot a limited number of Cormorants but hadn't renewed their license. This was a paperwork error on their part but still an offence. Both offenders admitted the offences and were dealt with a Community Resolution. Both offenders made donations to a local wildlife charity.

Disturbing nesting birds is always a tricky offence for us to prove and we, as always, have received many reports over the spring months last year. We had everything from motorbikes riding over ground hosting little tern nests, sea gull nests being removed, and nests being removed from wall cavities. Most of these end up with officers providing suitable advice. Proving culpability beyond reasonable doubt can be very difficult and as always, educational and awareness programmes around wildlife crime is key.

I know wildlife pest control and the use of traps is always controversial. We regularly get calls or information about traps believed to have been set illegally, and not complying with licenses.

On most occasions when we attend these reports, we find that the traps are set correctly or that all that is required is for the user to reset the trap slightly, and we help users as much as possible. However, there are also those cases when there are serious breaches, and these require further investigation.

Some of the traps we have seen this past year have included Larson traps that were incorrectly set and failed to meet welfare grounds, Fenn traps not set in appropriate tunnels, snares set against fence lines and the wrong bait used in traps. We still have a live

investigation into a report of an otter sadly being killed in a trap and another involving two buzzards caught in Fenn traps. Identifying those responsible for setting the traps is often difficult as the bird travels some distance from the location where it is trapped to where it comes to rest, often from the exhaustion of carrying a heavy trap.

The RSPCA will often lead on animal welfare investigations but as a force we also pick up several investigations or work alongside colleagues in the RSPCA who have expertise in these matters. Alongside all this, there are so many more small investigations that we pick up...from illegal poaching, concerns around developments to reports of wildlife being harmed.

Throughout the year ahead I will always try to say as much as I can about investigations as these can be informative for those who committed the offence but also others can learn from their mistakes. My advice to anybody who is considering carrying out work that could affect wildlife is always: seek an expert opinion and be aware that much of our environment and wildlife are protected in some way or another by legislation. That said, you can of course often do most things if it is carried out correctly and with the right licence or mitigation management in place.

### WhatsApp Group

The Operation Randall WhatsApp group is expanding. At present the group mainly consists of partner agencies, key landowners and administrators of other social media rural groups. I am currently looking at increasing the size of this group so if you meet one or more of the above criteria – work for a partner agency, key landowner or you administer another rural group on social media - or if you think you would benefit or be able to contribute in any way, I want to hear from you. You can contact me on email at [christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk)

### Dogs Worrying Livestock and Seals

Another crime that has appeared in the headlines a few times over the last 12 months is sheep or livestock worrying. At this time of year there are fewer reports of sheep being attacked but there has still been the occasional report. Please always keep your dogs on leads around seals and livestock. At this time of year, sheep start to become very vulnerable with many ewes heavily in lamb.

This year we have worked with the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute one dog owner after it killed a couple of sheep. The owner was ordered to pay compensation to the victim. In a similar incident, the offender was issued with a Community Resolution with a requirement to pay compensation for the loss of sheep.

We will continue to investigate any similar offences. It isn't acceptable to claim your dog doesn't normally do it. Dog owners are responsible for the actions of their dog. Dogs should always be kept on leads and well away from livestock.

Sadly, what we do get at this time of year, are reports of dogs attacking seals and seal pups. Humans and dogs should be kept well away from seals as close interaction can result in seal pups being abandoned.

It can often look like a seal lying on the beach on its own is sick but often, this isn't the case as the pups are often left on their own while mothers go out to feed. If you ever have any concerns around seals along our coastline, please contact RSPCA or the Friends of Horsey Seals which will offer advice or attend the location.

### Hare Coursing—OP Galileo

It may be too early to say this yet but, for now, we remain on course for a record-breaking year – for the right reasons! Our calls to service for reports of hare coursing – this is known as OP Galileo - remain well below what we would normally expect. We do continue to receive a few calls, largely in marshland in the west of the county.

At the turn of December, we issued another three 7 Force Community Protection Warnings. The work we are doing as 7 forces is having a significant impact – it means anyone issued with a warning is liable to be issued with a notice next time and are likely to end up in court on a further breach which means we can apply for driving bans, dog confiscations to orders to prevent them from keeping dogs. On top of that we are working with more than 30 forces across the country sharing intelligence to try to disrupt this impactful and cruel crime.

Please, if you see any hare coursing in progress, call 999 immediately. Ideally, and if it is safe to do so, please provide a description of any vehicles involved and where they are parked. You can use What3Words to describe a location so we can direct resources to often very rural and isolated locations.

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### GPS Thefts

Tractor GPS thefts remain ever present in our work moving forward this year and has seen significant work across the country to disrupt this organised criminality. Earlier in the year, we saw the arrest and conviction of a Yarmouth man for such offences. Other counties and countries have also arrested and dealt with several people for this sort of criminality. These crimes are high value thefts so when we look at the cost of crime on rural communities in terms of financial value, GPS thefts have a significant impact.

Unfortunately, these crimes can be very costly and time consuming for victims having to reprogram new devices. This year we have had some success in returning stolen equipment to their rightful owners, and this has been where owners have placed their own trackers on such devices and marked them. This has meant that when large quantities of GPS systems have been recovered, they have been identified. Marking your device with your postcode and making your ownership obvious remains a key tool in trying to deter thieves, as they're harder to sell on with your postcode all over them! Also, where possible, always remove devices from machines when not in use.

### Heritage Crime

This year has seen PC Chris Holmes join the Op Randall team and with him has come his enthusiasm for heritage related issues. By working with partners and through better understanding of this specialist area, he has found that illegal metal detecting or nighthawking, as it is also known, is an issue that has gone unseen for many years.

Sadly, this month has seen more reports of illegal metal detecting on the Roman Fort at Caistor St Edmund. The land is scheduled, and this is an offence under The Ancient Monuments Act 1979. There are regular patrols

around scheduled monuments, and we also ask members of the public to keep a look out for any suspicious persons around these monuments, and if a crime is in progress, please report this to us on 999. If you have information about a crime that has happened, please share this with us on 101. Alternatively, if you have any information about people you suspect are participating in illegal metal detecting, you can email PC Holmes at [christopher.holmes2@norfolk.police.uk](mailto:christopher.holmes2@norfolk.police.uk)

### Heating Oil Thefts

It was anticipated that we may see an increase in heating oil thefts with the surge in fuel prices and the cost-of-living crisis biting. We put plans together and worked with Norfolk County Council to make sure help was available to victims of fuel theft, so they can keep themselves and their families warm. The Norfolk Assistance Scheme has lots of ways to help those who are struggling, and you can find out more by visiting: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/nas](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/nas).

Crime prevention is still the best course of action, and we would advise all owners of heating oil tanks to protect their tanks with good CCTV and security lighting. For any advice around security of your tanks, please email PC Holmes at:

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## January in the Wild

January can be a tough month for us humans: cold, wet, often windy, and long dark nights when the sun makes very few appearances. The sun is a very welcome visitor when it does appear! If it's tough for us, it's sure to be tough for our wildlife.

I can't help but think about our garden birds at this time of the year. Birds like Blackbirds, Thrushes and Robins rely on soft ground with plenty of worms available or berries and seeds from plants. These are often few-and-far-between this time of year so please, if you can put out a few extra treats for them to enjoy, they would be welcome. It can take birds a little while to work out where a food source is but once they find it, you will be rewarded with a daily visit from many of our garden regulars.

Most of our mammals are well into their winter slow down. You shouldn't be seeing hedgehogs out at this time of year and if you are it's best to seek expert advice. Likewise, bats shouldn't be about during these cold months.

Now is the time to carry out any last-minute pond maintenance before the Great Crested Newts and other aquatic life starts to work its way back by the end of February for the breeding months. Newts will often move to undergrowth, log piles or even stone walls to avoid frosts. They can travel as far as 500 metres away from a pond to curl up for winter so just be mindful of suitable locations around a pond whilst carrying out work. Great Crested Newts are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

On our farms most of our cattle remain inside and are being fed a winter ration, and they also require constant fresh bedding. Even those who do stay outside will have to be supplemented as there is nothing nutritious left in our grass lands. Some will be grazed on stubble turnips; however, you don't see so much of this in Norfolk.

Stubble turnips planted after the winter cereal crops are

harvested in the summer are more likely to be grazed by sheep in Norfolk. These provide some great feed over winter.

All breeding ewes will hopefully be well in lamb now and some will have even started lambing, especially pedigree flocks who prefer to lamb early to provide large lambs for the show ring later in the year or for breed society markets. It is essential over the next few months that pregnant ewes are not put under any stress as this often leads to complications. Dogs worrying livestock is a real threat, please always keep dogs on leads around livestock.

Avian flu continues to circulate with our wild bird population and, sadly, within domestic flocks. A housing order remains in place and all domestic poultry must be housed and 'barriered' from wild birds.

On our fields sugar beet continues to be lifted this time of year and carted into the factories at Cantley and Wissington where this bulb plant, which originated 100s of years ago from the sea, is turned into sugar. Sugar beet is one of very few crops grown on a large scale and is harvested in the winter months. This is because of its biology of creating high sugar content. In short, sugar beet needs a mild growing season, but its sugar content is then secured in the bulb from a cold period.

Other field work is often on hold this month because the ground far too wet, which gives a great opportunity for general farm maintenance to be carried out.

## Conclusion

Thank you again for taking the time to read through our year in review. The investigations I have mentioned are just a snapshot of the type and volume of crime we've been dealing with over the past 12 months.

As always, we will continue to try to share as much information with you as possible and where we're legally able to do so. Thank you for your continued support.

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## HAVE YOUR SAY

[www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk)

## POLICE BUDGET 2023/24

### Police Budget consultation now live - Have Your Say

Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner, Giles Orpen-Smellie has launched his Police Budget Consultation.

Residents of Norfolk are being asked if the PCC should increase the police precept of council tax for the coming year.

Last year, the PCC toured Norfolk talking to people about policing in their communities. During the two-week consultation, Giles Orpen-Smellie will continue visiting libraries and community centres to discuss the challenges Norfolk Constabulary face in a financially challenging environment.

The consultation is a legal requirement that the PCC must carry out each year.

Having discussed funding with the Chief Constable Paul Sanford, Giles is seeking the community's support for a precept rise of 5.2%.

Based on a 5.2% increase, a Band D property would pay an extra £14.94 or 29 pence per week and a Band B property would pay £11.62 a year or 22 pence a week.

In the published information Giles said: "Resources are limited, demand for policing services is growing and policing cannot compromise. The policing family is bigger than the officers on the front line – it takes a range of different services to support them, including police staff, members of the Special Constabulary and other vital volunteers.

"Significant savings have already been made but, put simply the police need the tools to do their job and if we are to maintain the same level of service as last year those working behind the scenes need to be funded.

"I have discussed with the Chief Constable every possibility to save money across current staffing capability and activity and I can assure you that the constabulary are as efficient in using your money as they possibly can be.

"I recognise that no-one likes to pay more tax but the choice before us, sadly, is either to pay a little more or to risk reducing the policing service

available to the public."

Paul Sanford, Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary said: "Our detectives now investigate more rape and sexual offences than any other crime with our public protection unit teams working tirelessly to manage offenders within our community.

"Policing has always been the service of first and last resort. Our duty is to serve our communities to the best of our abilities, but at the moment this means handling situations outside the criminal realm, which we are feeling the impact of, now more than ever.

"When other agencies struggle to deliver their own service, we end up filling the gaps.

"While we will continue to work hard to maintain our service, you can trust, that we are only seeking an increase because we really feel it's necessary."

Have your say now: <https://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/key-information/finance/norfolk-police-budget-consultation/>

The consultation will run until 5pm, Monday 16 January.

More information and the consultation survey can be found on our website: [Police budget 2023/24 consultation | Norfolk PCC \(norfolk-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)

Printed copies of the survey and consultation documents are also available and can be requested by contacting the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk (OPCCN) in the following ways:

Post: OPCCN, Jubilee House, Building 7, Falconers Chase, Wymondham, NR18 0WW

Telephone: 01953 424455

Email: [opccn@norfolk.police.uk](mailto:opccn@norfolk.police.uk)