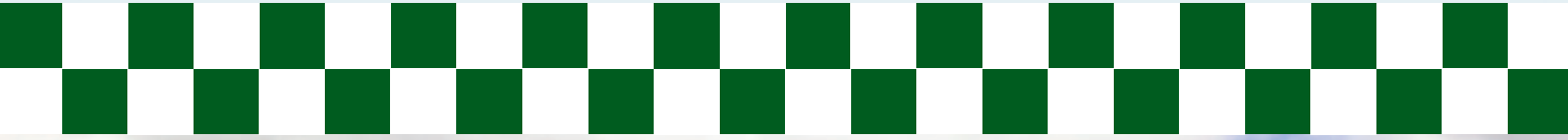


# Rural Beat

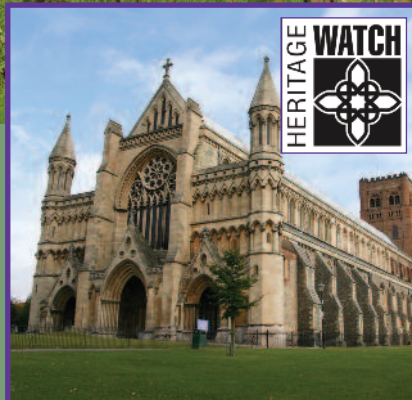
Rural policing in Hertfordshire

2016/2017

Issue 2



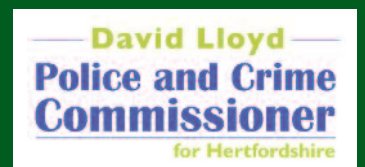
Rural Riders



Heritage Watch Update



Tackling Fly-tipping



Reducing crime, catching criminals and keeping people safe

# Rural policing in Hertfordshire

Welcome to the second edition of 'Rural Beat' - the magazine for people living and working in rural areas featuring the latest news on rural policing - how your local police and partner agencies are working to reduce rural crime and keep you, Hertfordshire's countryside and it's many assets safe.

In Hertfordshire we are privileged to enjoy vast expanses of countryside which are, for the most part, quiet and tranquil. However, although crime occurs far less frequently in rural locations, it can still have a huge impact on those living and working in rural communities.

Hertfordshire Constabulary takes tackling rural crime very seriously and has dedicated police officers, PCSOs and Rural Special Constables, based within Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs), across the county to tackle issues at a local level. The five-strong county-wide Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) specialises in preventing crimes concerning wildlife, agriculture, equine issues, the county's heritage and the local environment. The officers include Inspector Lara Richards, Sergeant Jamie Bartlett, PC Jos Bartlett, PC Simon Tibbet and DC Amanda Matthews, supported by several special constables.

ROST also supports local SNT and intervention teams investigating 'rural' crimes ranging from badger baiting, hare coursing and the theft of red diesel, to night hawking, stolen plant equipment, criminal damage and the theft of metal from historic buildings.

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Sgt Jamie Bartlett, PC Jos Bartlett, PC Simon Tibbett and DC Amanda Matthews from Hertfordshire Constabulary's Rural Operational Support Team



"In my role as Chief Constable I am well aware of the impact of rural crime and the importance of tackling it, particularly given that I have recently arrived from Norfolk, where I previously lived and worked.

"We are committed to tackling rural crime in Hertfordshire. It's important that we have the right balance between urban and rural policing and to understand the specific challenges that rural policing brings.

"In Hertfordshire we have highly-trained and very experienced officers policing the rural areas. Not only are they well-informed but they are also well-equipped with new technology, including mobile data devices, which give them live information about crime, criminals and the vehicles they use, so they can act immediately no matter where they are.

"We also like to keep in touch with our local residents and hold regular Barns Meets, inviting farmers and others with a vested interest, to allow them to talk directly to us about their concerns. We can also feedback what we are doing to tackle crimes in their area. I will try to attend as many Barn Meets as I can, alongside your local teams - there are always new things that I learn which help in my role overseeing the whole county, ensuring that we keep the right balance of resources between our rural and urban areas.

"Fly-tipping is a great example of this – the subject crops up at every Barn Meet and this offence has a huge impact on the rural environment – visually and financially (in the effort to clean it up and safely dispose of the waste) and it can also pose a danger. This issue has such a devastating impact that we have worked hard with our partners for a solution. You can read more about that in this magazine.

"Our police teams also carry out special multi-agency days aimed at identifying and then securing vulnerable rural areas and properties and advising local residents about how they keep their property safe and secure.

"I hope you enjoy our latest edition of Rural Beat and reading about the important work we are doing to keep rural areas of the county safe."

**Chief Constable Charlie Hall**



"As Police and Crime Commissioner, I remain determined to ensure that rural communities have their voices heard. My time at District Days, Barn Meets, community events, public forums and meetings with individuals allows me to find out what is going on in and around Hertfordshire. That knowledge is then used when setting my Police and Crime Plan to encompass these issues of concern.

"National crime survey figures suggest that rural crime cost the economy an estimated £800 million in 2015, with the average cost to victims in rural households of £2,500 and £4,000 for businesses. This is a high price to pay. So my Police and Crime Plan makes it clear that all forms of rural crime, including fly-tipping, fly-grazing and anti-social behaviour, will continue be addressed in Hertfordshire as an important part of the local policing agenda."

**Police and Crime Commissioner David Lloyd**

# Study the Latest Rural Crime Prevention Advice On line

Raise your awareness of how to prevent rural crime by taking the latest course on Hertfordshire's online crime advice and education portal, Citizens' Academy.

The website, at [www.hertscitizensacademy.org](http://www.hertscitizensacademy.org) was launched in March 2016 by Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, to ensure that everyone can play their part in keeping Hertfordshire safe. All you need is internet access.

The site offers crime prevention information and advice with a range of videos and interactive quizzes to help people protect themselves and their property.

After initial success with e-learning modules on burglary, theft, personal safety and fraud/cybercrime, the site's courses will continue to be expanded on a rolling basis. One specialist theme focuses on crimes that can particularly affect rural communities and the actions we can all take to keep us, and our rural communities, safe.



The Commissioner's office liaised with organisations including the National Farmers Union, British Horse Society and the Constabulary's Rural Operational Support Team for their input and feedback on the rural crime section.

Commissioner Lloyd said: "The question of rural crime is frequently raised with me by the public. I remain committed to ensuring that the concerns raised are addressed by the police and others with a responsibility for the issues.

"Citizens' Academy brings crime prevention advice, education and awareness right into people's homes and businesses - and to everyone's fingertips. We all have a responsibility to keep our communities safe and this website could give you the tools to play your part in preventing and reducing crime across the county."

Citizens' Academy complements the existing detailed information available at:

[www.herts.police.uk/crimeprevention](http://www.herts.police.uk/crimeprevention)

## Could you be a Rural Special Constable?

**Could you help to police 275,000 acres of Hertfordshire countryside in your spare time? The Constabulary is recruiting volunteer police officers to join its dedicated Special Constabulary, with a focus on rural officers.**

The Constabulary was the first police force in the country to introduce and pioneer Rural Special Constables. Since then (October 2009), many other forces across the UK have also introduced these specialist volunteer police officers.

Regular open evenings are hosted at Police Headquarters in Welwyn Garden City and other locations around the county, where you can find out all you need to know about becoming a special constable before you take the plunge and apply. There is also information on-line giving an insight into the Special Constabulary and what it is like to join the team. Visit [www.herts.police/specials](http://www.herts.police/specials)

Rural Special Constables are dedicated to the needs of rural communities and are specially trained to have an understanding of rural issues and the countryside they serve.

They work alongside the force's Rural Operation Support Team (ROST) and local Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

They can be involved in a huge range of policing issues from investigating heritage crime, preventing hare coursing, dealing with fly-tipping, to tackling poaching and investigating wildlife offences.

Not sure if you fit the bill? Perhaps you know a family member, neighbour or friend who is 18 or over and wants to actively play their part in keeping Hertfordshire a safe place? Please encourage them to find out more.

Look out for dates of the next open evenings or visit [www.hertspolicecareers.co.uk](http://www.hertspolicecareers.co.uk)

- Don't feel you could put on the full kit, drive a marked police car and arrest a suspect? Have you thought about volunteering in an office-based police role with Hertfordshire Constabulary? For more details about our Police Community Volunteers please visit [www.hertspolicecareers.co.uk/police-community-volunteers](http://www.hertspolicecareers.co.uk/police-community-volunteers)

# Hare Coursing Incidents on the Rise

Hare coursing has been totally illegal for more than a decade, since the implementation of the Hunting Act 2004. While the number of reported cases in Hertfordshire has generally been decreasing year on year, a much larger number have been reported so far this year, particularly in North Herts

This banned sport sees greyhounds and lurchers, chasing a hare by sight, not scent. Usually, but not always, carried out in groups, the dogs flush out the hares in the fields and are then released from their leads to chase, and often kill, the hare. Sometimes, the practice is highly organised. Significant sums of money can change hands in the form of illegal betting and gambling on the outcome. The victor is determined by the first dog to catch and 'turn' the hare or kill it.



Those engaged in this illegal act often trespass on private land, damaging crops and property, as well as intimidating and showing violence towards those who dare to challenge their presence. It can also be very distressing for members of the public to witness hare coursing. Intelligence indicates that many of those engaged in hare coursing also carry in out other forms of rural-based acquisitive crime.

## Reported incidents

2012 to 2013 season	80
2013 to 2014 season	68
2014 to 2015 season	34
2015 to 2016 season so far	56
<i>(reported up to August 2016)</i>	

"We have been doing extra training with call takers in our Force Communications Room, to ensure we are able to respond quickly and appropriately to calls from people about hare coursing in progress. Our rural officers have also received extra support to enable them to tackle this crime effectively," explains PC Simon Tibbett from the Rural Operational Support Team. "We have also carried out some Action Days in North Herts with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team to help tackle the problem there."



More good news is that the impact of hare coursing on local communities is being recognised in the courts. In May 2016, a man from Bounds Green in North London was convicted of hare coursing offences, which he committed in East Herts during December 2015 and January 2016. He was ordered to pay fines and costs in excess of £1,000.

In August, 2016 two men from the London area appeared at Hatfield Remand Court after being reported for hare coursing in East Herts in April 2016. Both pleaded guilty and received fines.

Rural Sergeant for East Herts, Duncan Wallace, said: "We have worked hard with the rural community to encourage them to report suspected incidents to us, particularly while they are still in progress, as this gives us a chance of identifying the coursers and catch them in the act.

"We have also put up signs in popular coursing areas to try to deter this activity, as well as publicising our robust approach to this crime, and using social media to alert landowners and local residents if we believe coursers could be in their area."

PC Tibbett added: "The nature of much of the rural landscape in Hertfordshire - large arable expanses and lack of hedgerows - makes the area attractive to coursers as such habitat is favoured by the brown hare."

"Incidents may be relatively few in number but we take this type of crime very seriously and, where possible, we will always attend a report in progress."



# United Fight Against Fly-Tipping Blight

**Fly-tipping is a crime - it blights the local landscape, pollutes land and waterways and costs a significant amount of money to remove.**

Fly-tipping is a problem in Hertfordshire but the Constabulary is now working closely with Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, the Environment Agency and local councils under a new partnership agreement to target and prosecute anyone caught illegally depositing waste.



Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of rubbish and bulky items on land not licensed to receive it. It can range from a single filled refuse bag, to beds and sofas, or multiple loads of construction waste. It can have a major impact on the quality of life for people living nearby. Where rubbish is dumped on private land it is still a crime but the landowner has to remove it, which can cause significant financial loss.

## Five years in Prison

Dumping waste illegally is a serious criminal offence that can carry a fine up to £50,000 and/ or five years imprisonment. It is also an offence to allow fly-tipping to take place. If you give waste to another person for disposal and the waste is subsequently fly-tipped, if you have not checked whether that person is authorised to carry waste, or where the waste is going, this may be investigated and you could be prosecuted for failing to carry out a 'duty of care'. Fly-tipping often involves dumping waste from vehicles. In this case the person who owns the vehicle can also be prosecuted, which means that it is possible for a prosecution to occur even when only the vehicle, not the driver, is identifiable. In these cases the vehicle could be also be seized and destroyed.

The police and authorised officers can stop, search and seize vehicles being used, or suspected of being used, for illegal waste activities, including fly-tipping.

Inspector Lara Richards said: "We have been working hard with local councils and communities to effectively tackle fly-tips across Hertfordshire. We live and work in a county with some beautiful rural areas and we don't want it spoilt by those who think it is okay to litter or fly-tip their rubbish, big or small.

"Our message is simple, if you have some rubbish or waste dispose of it properly. If you don't know how to do that then check out this web page for advice: [www.hertsdirect.org/flytip](http://www.hertsdirect.org/flytip)

"If you see incidents of fly-tipping in progress then please dial 999 immediately. Please give as much information as you can to give us every chance to apprehend them at, or leaving, the scene."

If you come across a fly-tip and you cannot see who might be responsible at the scene, or it appears to have been there for some time, you should contact your local council on the following numbers or email addresses:

<b>Broxbourne</b> enquiries@broxbourne.gov.uk	<b>01992 785555</b>
<b>Dacorum</b> feedback@dacorum.gov.uk	<b>01442 228000</b>
<b>East Herts</b> operations.admin@eastherts.gov.uk	<b>01279 655261</b>
<b>Hertsmere</b> waste.management@hertsmere.gov.uk	<b>020 8207 2277</b>
<b>North Herts</b> service@north-herts.gov.uk	<b>01462 474000</b>
<b>St Albans</b> a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk	<b>01727 819 598</b>
<b>Stevenage</b> environmentalservices@stevenage.gov.uk	<b>0800 136661</b>
<b>Three Rivers</b> enquiries@threerivers.gov.uk	<b>01923 776611</b>
<b>Watford</b> enquiries@watford.gov.uk	<b>01923 226400</b>
<b>Welwyn Hatfield</b> whc@welhat.gov.uk	<b>01707 357000</b>

**Alternatively call the police non-emergency number 101**

Councils will investigate, working with police when required, and will also work to clear the waste if it is dumped in a public place. Private landowners are responsible for clearing fly-tips on their own land unless the waste is hazardous to the public.

# Commissioner's Support in Fly-Tipping Battle

**Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), David Lloyd, has driven forward the partnership agreement to tackle fly-tipping.**

He said: "I am delighted that a new fly-tipping procedure has now been agreed between police and local authorities across Hertfordshire after my call for action.

"Fly-tipping is a complaint that comes up again and again at the public meetings I attend and in letters and emails I receive. It is clear that a piecemeal approach and inconsistency across the county has not been very effective

in tackling the illegal dumping of waste. I am confident that increased awareness and partnership working will reduce incidents, increase prosecutions and help to keep our county clean and safe."

## Partnership Fund

To continue the PCC's commitment to tackling anti-social incidents across Hertfordshire, a 'Partnership Fund' has been set aside to deal with issues, including fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour, which will work on a match-funding basis, with £100,000 set aside each year for the next four years.

## Preventing fly-tipping

- For more information and advice on how to prevent fly-tipping, what to do if you witness it and how to dispose of your waste properly please visit: [www.hertsdirect.org/flytip](http://www.hertsdirect.org/flytip)
- Both businesses and individuals should ensure that anyone they contract to take away their rubbish is a registered waste carrier. Ask for their carriers' authorisation and ask where they are taking the waste. You can check waste carriers online at the Environment Agency's website [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency) or by telephone 03708 506506.
- Ask for a receipt detailing where the waste is going, vehicle details and carriers' authorisation number - this is a legal obligation if you are in business but is good practice if you are a private householder. Further information is available from the DEFRA website: [www.gov.uk/browse/business/waste-environment](http://www.gov.uk/browse/business/waste-environment)
- If you are a business and would like to know more about protecting your environment use [www.netRegs.org.uk](http://www.netRegs.org.uk)
- Many local councils offer a 'large item collection' service for household waste that you need to have removed; contact your council, using the details on page 6, for more information.

# Police Call Takers Go Wild



Staff in the Force Communications Room (FCR) took part in the National Wildlife Trust's 'Get Wild for 30 Days' initiative in June 2016. The scheme encouraged people to get out and about and 'reconnect with nature'.

It was promoted throughout the Force by Communications Operator, Sarah Manning (pictured left), who championed the benefits of exploring Hertfordshire's countryside.

"Having been a Communications Operator in the FCR for just over 12 years and currently seconded to the Training Team, I am very aware of the impact of shift work on physical and mental health," explained Sarah.

"In an office environment, like the FCR, you can easily fall into the trap of a sedentary lifestyle and it's easy to go an

entire set of shifts during the winter without seeing much daylight. There has been plenty of research to highlight the health risks of shift work, which is why I felt so inclined to promote this initiative. I truly believe that being outdoors and around nature can improve your mental and physical health." This doesn't just apply to police but any shift workers and anyone with a full-time job or a carer who doesn't get much time outdoors.

Each team in the FCR was encouraged to arrange their own outdoor activities, such as dog walks or photography competitions.

Sarah added: "As well as the obvious personal benefits, there are operational benefits too, with Hertfordshire being approximately 80 per cent rural, it is vital that rural crime gets the attention it deserves. Surprisingly, many rural crime offenders have links to organised crime, and rural offences often result in huge financial implications for farmers and land owners.

"The Hertfordshire countryside is stunning and, even if you live in a densely-populated urban area, you're just a short drive from green fields or woodland. It's imperative that we look after our rural areas and enjoy all that it has to offer."

# Dog Attacks Bite in Rural Areas

**Dog walking in the countryside has always been a popular pastime, however, some dog walkers are behaving irresponsibly by failing to ensure their dogs are under their control, resulting in potential harm to other walkers, farm animals and wildlife. Over the last year, Hertfordshire Constabulary has seen an increase in the number of reports of dogs being dangerously out of control.**

The Rural Operational Support Team has been working closely with officers across the Force and the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association and the National Sheep Association to help tackle this issue. They also have a dedicated Rural Crime Case Director who advises on these matters.

“We have had a particular problem in East Herts, with many sheep fatally injured whilst others were subject to injury and suffering,” explained Rural Sergeant, Duncan Wallace. “I think part of the problem is that people do not understand the consequences of allowing their dogs to run loose near livestock. Sheep in particular often die of fright or the stress of the situation, as well as from an actual attack.”

Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, East Herts police alone investigated 15 incidents of dogs worrying livestock, which is a slight increase from the previous year.

## **Know the Law**

Sgt Wallace continued: “I also don’t think many people understand the law or realise that they could be committing an offence. Under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, if a dog worries livestock on agricultural land, the person in charge of the dog is guilty of an offence. The Act considers ‘sheep worrying’ to include attacking sheep, chasing them in a way that may cause injury, suffering, causing abortion or loss of produce, or being at large (ie not on a lead or otherwise under close control) in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep. The Act does not require livestock to be killed for this offence to be committed.



“In some circumstances a farmer may shoot a dog which is attacking or chasing farm animals and they are not liable for compensating the dog’s owner. Sadly, a farmer was forced to take such action earlier this year, after local dogs were continually allowed to roam unsupervised in and around his sheep, resulting in the loss of many of his flock. One dog was destroyed and another injured.”

Other dog owners have also found themselves convicted for ‘allowing their dog to be dangerously out of control’ which, since a change in legislation last year, can be committed in a privately-owned as well as public place. Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, 125 incidents of dogs being dangerously out of control were recorded. In some cases, the owner found themselves cautioned or summonsed to court for this recordable criminal matter.

“It is vital that you keep your dog on a lead and under control whilst enjoying the countryside,” added Sgt Wallace. “Dogs will often navigate hedges and fences to gain access to fields or areas around livestock, even if you can usually trust it to come to call. If you live in or near a farming area, you must make sure that your dog cannot escape from your property, as it may find its way onto land containing sheep.”





# Heritage Watch Features on BBC's Crimewatch Roadshow



**Hertfordshire Constabulary's fight against Heritage Crime was highlighted on daytime television back in June, when officers from the Rural**

**Operational Support Team (ROST) appeared on the BBC's Crimewatch Roadshow.**

The programme was broadcast live against the backdrop of the stunning St Albans Abbey. Detectives made appeals for information about unsolved crimes and Sgt Jamie Bartlett was interviewed about the county's Heritage Watch scheme, which aims to combat heritage crime.

Heritage crime is defined as 'any offence which harms the value of heritage assets, and their settings, to this and future generations'. This includes graffiti, and other types of criminal damage, burglary and theft.

Like Neighbourhood Watch, Heritage Watch uses the award-winning OWL (Online Watch Link) in Hertfordshire to communicate police messages. For this specialist scheme, members are people who live close to historical sites, and those with an interest in our local history and frequent the county's heritage sites. They let police know if they see any suspicious activity.

Crimewatch Roadshow highlighted a growing issue around the UK of the theft of old stone paving, which can have a high resale value, and is often found in and around churches and other old or historic buildings. It can be vulnerable to theft and can be costly to repair and replace.

## Night Hawking

Sgt Bartlett talked about another heritage crime known as 'night hawking', which is the activity of using metal-detecting equipment to locate and remove buried antiquities without the permission of landowners, or where the practice is banned.

The Constabulary's Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) coordinates the force's response to heritage crime, supporting local police officers. They have established links with organisations including Natural England, English Heritage and Hertfordshire County Council.

These links have identified locations across our county that are subject to additional protection due to potential heritage crimes.

Offences against heritage assets can carry considerable sentencing or fines.

Police ask that members of the public report any suspected heritage crime in the same way as any other crime - using 999 when you believe a crime is in progress, and 101 for all other calls.

## Lead Theft

PC Jos Bartlett (ROST), who is Heritage Crime Lead for the Constabulary assisted co-ordinating Operation Crucible, a national effort to tackle increasing numbers of thefts of lead and copper from churches.

Jos worked with many officers across the force during National Metal Theft & Heritage Crime Week, in September to highlight this type of crime. Scrap Metal Yards were visited and checked, multi - agency operations were sets up which saw many vehicles being stopped and a variety of offences uncovered. Another week of action is planned for December - another opportunity to increase Heritage Watch membership.

Find out more about Heritage Watch at [www.herts.police.uk/advice/rural\\_policing.aspx](http://www.herts.police.uk/advice/rural_policing.aspx) or contact your local Safer Neighbourhood Team on call 101. The Crimewatch appeals included a burglary in Harpenden and a theft on Borehamwood.



## Mystery of the missing milestones

Two 18th century milestones stolen from Harpenden and Redbourn were recovered by members of the public within just a few hours of each other, in April 2016.

Milestones have been placed along major routes since Roman times and indicate the direction of the next habitation or major town or city. The theft of a milestone is classed as a heritage crime.

The first stone was stolen in August 2012 from the A5183 close to the Punchbowl Lane turning. It was discovered by a member of the public in Dodds Lane, Hemel Hempstead.

Just a few hours later and around six miles away in Kings Langley, a milestone which was stolen from Watling Street in St Albans in March 2016, was found.



## Town's Heritage Watch members double in strength

Membership to Heritage Watch has more than doubled in the Watford area after local PCSOs visited all of their sites as defined by Historic England, to try and sign as many people up as possible.

Watford Neighbourhood Sergeant Steve Alison said: "We have a high number of heritage sites in Watford, so it is vital that we are able to stay in regular contact with the proprietors and assist them to be in contact with each other. Through Heritage Watch we can alert them to any potential crime trends and keep them up to date with what we are doing to help protect their sites.

"It has also allowed officers in the Safer Neighbourhood Teams to have a better understanding of the issues surrounding heritage crime and ensure any reports are investigated thoroughly. We hope to run a special Heritage Crime Awareness Day in the future."

## The decapitated statue

A 150-year-old statue takes pride of place outside Beckwiths Antique Shop in Hertford's historic St Andrews Street, where it has been for many years. Sadly, overnight on March 25, 2016, the statue's head was deliberately removed in an act of vandalism.

"This is a sad, but quite typical case, where a piece of history that was enjoyed by many and had stood unharmed at the location for many years, has now been irreparably damaged," said Sergeant Jamie Bartlett from ROST.

Following investigations and appeals, a 19-year-old local man was arrested and charged with criminal damage. He was given a conditional discharge by magistrates and ordered to pay £985 compensation to the owner.



The statue is now restored and back in situ. Sgt Bartlett said: "Hertfordshire Constabulary takes heritage crime very seriously and people need to understand that and realise that this kind of mindless action could lead to a criminal conviction."

## Riding to the rescue!

### Calling all horse riders - play a part in keeping rural areas safe



### If you ride regularly in Hertfordshire, you could play a part in helping rural areas to stay safe.

Hertfordshire Constabulary is asking horse riders to join Horse Watch and be additional 'eyes and ears' for police by reporting anything suspicious or out of the ordinary while out hacking.

Riders joining HorseWatch will not be expected to challenge any people they come across who are acting suspiciously, or committing a criminal offence, but will provide information to police and help support police crime prevention measures – similar to the way Neighbourhood Watch operates.

Sergeant Jamie Bartlett from the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) said: "Riders can make a real difference to their local community without having to formally volunteer or put themselves at any risk. We hope that by receiving additional intelligence from riders we can tackle more rural crime – offences that we may not already be aware of because they are in a remote area, or by providing a vehicle registration number that helps to track down a criminal.

"This scheme is all about having extra eyes and ears in areas that police officers cannot easily regularly patrol."

Anyone interested in this scheme should register their interest by email to [HorseWatch@Herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:HorseWatch@Herts.pnn.police.uk) with their name and contact details. Once registered, you can choose to receive OWL messages from police with useful crime prevention advice and crime alerts.

A free-high visibility tabard will be given to any riders who want to take part, as well as free tack security marking and crime prevention information.

## Mounting support in East Herts

If you live in East Herts you could join the 100 plus horse riders who have now signed up to East Herts Police Rural Riders scheme, broadly similar to the countywide Horse Watch.

Launched in 2013, by PCSO Karen Broad, the scheme encourages local riders to be on the lookout when they are out and about, reporting anything suspicious or out of the ordinary to the police via the non-emergency number 101.

“Horse riders often hack through places that other people don’t regularly access and may spot something that needs reporting,” explained Karen. “For example we have had riders contact us regarding anti-social behaviour, illegal motorcycling or quad biking, fly-tipping, suspicious vehicles or people, hare coursing, animal cruelty and criminal damage. Riders can also help us track missing people.

“We have also had number plates from stolen vehicles found by some Rural Riders, which helped us with our enquiries into stolen vehicles. Sometimes it’s the small things that can make the bigger picture complete.

“Numerous issues with bridleways have also been reported and passed on to Hertfordshire County Council and have swiftly been resolved.”

The ‘Rural Riders’ keep in contact with each other and Karen via a special Facebook page. This allows them to share information and advice relating to their area, including crime or suspicious incidents.

“The Rural Rider network is a fantastic way to keep in touch with rural issues in your area, as well as helping to keep your community safe. We would love to welcome more members, so if you would like to get involved please give me a call,” added Karen. All riders are provided with a branded hi-vis jacket to wear when riding.

Anyone who would like to join the scheme in East Herts, or to find out more, contact PCSO Karen Broad on 101 or via email: [Karen.broad@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Karen.broad@herts.pnn.police.uk)

## Reining in environmental crime in North Herts

A similar horse riders’ scheme specifically focussing on fly-tipping and other types of ‘environmental’ crime in rural North Hertfordshire, was launched in April.

The Community Horse Patrol Scheme (CHiPS), launched by Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, is funded by the North Hertfordshire Community Safety Partnership. It involves volunteers and their horses, from the Kings Walden and Cockernhoe area, undertaking patrols to detect and report environmental rural issues, include fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and other highways offences, arson, blocked drains and missing drain covers.

They also report animal welfare concerns, such as abandoned dogs or horses, and security issues, for example, broken gates or fences, and fire hazards, such as dry hay bales around harvest time.

Andy Godman, Head of Housing and Public Protection at North Herts District Council, said: "This project is an excellent example of partnership working in action. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated team of volunteers and we hope this initiative will lead to a reduction in the levels of environmental and rural crime in the area as well as acting as a deterrent to the perpetrators."



# Equine Matters around the County

## Green Yard scheme reunites straying horses with their owners



Officers in Hertfordshire attend around 13 calls a month about horses straying onto the public highway; however the police 'Green Yard' scheme continues to get the animals quickly to a place of safety.

Introduced in 2011, the scheme reduces the amount of time officers have to spend trying to trace the owner of a stray horse. It also enables horses to be quickly moved away from roads where they pose a danger to motorists, as well as themselves.

If the owner of a stray horse cannot be immediately traced, the Green Yard transport vehicle collects the horse and takes it to a suitable venue, so officers can swiftly leave the scene and deal with other incidents. The Green Yard will keep the horse for a maximum of 14 days, during which time officers will make all necessary enquiries to trace the owner.

"Some horses are successfully returned to their owners and those that aren't claimed are re-homed," explained DC Amanda Matthews, the Force's expert on equine matters and member of the ROST team. "The issues we usually face are that a lot of the horses are not micro-chipped and therefore owners cannot be traced before needing to implement the Green Yard procedure.

"Every horse is scanned for a chip before Greenyard is called and therefore could be returned to their owner much quicker if microchipped. We are urging horse owners to get their horses chipped – you never know when it could be your horse escaping onto a highway causing traffic chaos and putting people's lives in danger."

## Horse Health Days

The Rural Operational Support Team continues to promote Horse Health Days assisting up to 40 horses at a time.

These events cater primarily for members of the travelling community who traditionally own many horses. They ensure that horses can be identified, as required by current legislation, but it is also an opportunity for a vet to check each horse over thoroughly and advise owners on their welfare, if necessary.

In November 2015 a Horse Health Day at Smallford Pits, London Colney, chipped, passported and wormed 20 horses. Vets from the Royal Veterinary College attended and were assisted by British Horse Society representatives, the RSPCA, Trading Standards and Herts County Council (HCC). Owners were offered services at a reduced rate (assisted by funding from HCC) and could request other treatments, such as worming and vaccinations.

"Many owners still believe that their horses do not require a passport as they do not travel, however, it is a legal requirement for every equine in the UK to have a valid passport and, since 2009, any horse passported must now have a microchip," explained DC Amanda Matthews from the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST). "It is essential that the owner registers the microchip after insertion so that it can be traced back to them. Quite often a horse is found with a microchip but it was never registered so it doesn't help us."



## Tackling Illegal Grazing



**Fly-grazing, where horses are illegally grazed, or abandoned on land without the landowner's permission, continues to be a major problem across the UK, as well as here in Hertfordshire.**

Concerns surround the welfare of the horses being fly-grazed, as it is not unusual for them to find their way on to roads, posing a danger to themselves and other road users.

Most of these horses do not have microchips or equine passports so, with no way to contact their owners, plus issues with their health and well-being (including indiscriminate breeding, cruelty and neglect) the problem is a constant headache for welfare charities and the police.

However, the Control of Horses Act 2015, introduced in May last year to reduce the amount of fly-grazed horses, is now making it easier to effectively tackle the problem.

As part of the policy, landowners finding horses on their land should report this to the police within 24 hours in order for the Act to come into force.

“If the horse is not claimed by the owner within 96 hours, ownership of the horse is automatically transferred to the land owner. Therefore, they can arrange the disposal of the horse through its sale, gifting it to someone, for example a re-homing charity, or euthanasia,” explained DC Amanda Matthews.

“We have seen a fall in the number of fly-grazed horses reported to us as the owners no longer have the luxury of 14 days ‘free grazing’ before action can be taken.”

Hertfordshire Constabulary holds regular multi-agency Fly-Grazing meetings with local landowners, legal experts, local authorities and welfare organisations, including the British Horse Society (BHS), to assist with their understanding of the Control of Horses Act 2015 and where their responsibilities lie (see article right).

## Commissioner Reins in Fly-Grazing Problem

Fly-grazing is being proactively tackled in Hertfordshire, driven by Police & Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, who has used his unique position to bring agencies together.

Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, said: “Fly-grazing is a scourge that affects several areas of the county and, if not tackled, could worsen. That’s why I am glad to see the partnership group go forward and use recent legislation to maximum effect.

“Anti-social behaviour, road safety, rural issues and partnership working are four matters that I believe are vital to the quality of life of many Hertfordshire residents and businesses. Fly-grazing covers all these elements and paves the way for further effective joint working between agencies, the voluntary sector and businesses.”

Richard Thake, Hertfordshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Community Safety (pictured centre below), said: “Fly-grazing is an unacceptable practice. Animal welfare is an immense concern, as is the potential for wandering animals to cause death, or injury on the roads. We look to encourage responsible ownership of animals and are always happy to advise owners on looking after their livestock properly but, if our advice is ignored, we will not hesitate to join with our partners, the police and the animal welfare organisations, to take appropriate action where it is needed.”



**Above:** Participants at Hertfordshire’s fly-grazing seminar, hosted at Hertfordshire Constabulary Headquarters in Welwyn Garden City, including OPCC Deputy Chief Executive, Nina Villa, British Horse Society Herts’ chair, Lynn Myland, Cllr Richard Thake and members of the police ROST team and Force Communications Room.

## What to do if your land is being used for Fly-Grazing

**Landowners in Hertfordshire, who find their land encroached by horses that they do not own, and do not know who the owners are, are advised to register this with the police within 24 hours.**

You can report it by calling 101, or emailing [fcenquiries@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:fcenquiries@herts.pnn.police.uk) Then seek legal advice about removing the animals.

Advice can also be found at [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org) or the BHS

and various horse/animal charity websites. You must ensure the animals have access to fresh water and grass or hay while they remain on your property.

Horses found straying on main roads should be reported as an emergency, using 999.

Measures to prevent fly-grazing include securing fencing around vulnerable areas (for example grassland with easy public access) and putting up warning notices that action will be taken against fly-grazing.

# Barn Meets capture the burning crime issues

## The Constabulary's Barn Meets continue to attract large crowds, eager to quiz officers and seek reassurance that their concerns are being addressed.

Chief Inspector Gerry McDonald said: "Our Barn Meets are always very popular and well attended. In East Herts we have a huge rural area and its communities are very important to us. We understand the specific policing needs of the countryside and these events allow us to discuss these issues and show the force's commitment to rural communities"

Over the past year Barn Meets have been held in Redbourn, Royston, Hunsdon, Cuffley and Aldenham.

More than 220 local land owners, farmers, gamekeepers and other rural workers and residents have met with representatives from the police, the Police & Crime Commissioner's office and partner agencies\*. They discuss the burning issues, which affect them on a daily basis, in an informal environment.

### Prevent and detect

The events also allow local Safer Neighbourhood Team officers and members of the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST), to update local people about the on-going police work to prevent and detect rural crime.

Attendees hear about what is being done to tackle crime in their communities and how to prevent crimes which are specific to rural areas - including wildlife, environmental and heritage crime. Subjects covered included fly-tipping, hare coursing, burglary and the safety of rural roads.

This is followed by an open question and answer session.

"These events also allow us to meet our rural communities in an informal setting," said North Herts Chief Inspector, Julie Wheatley. "It is a great may for people to meet their rural police team, as well as the other partners and agencies who

have a role in protecting the rural areas. It also allows them to catch up with each other and share their concerns and ideas."

Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, added: "The question of rural crime is frequently raised by the public. I remain committed to ensuring that their concerns are addressed by the police. At Barn Meets, the Chief Constable and I directly listen and respond to pressing rural issues that blight the rural and farming communities on a daily basis.

"These events bring together key figures in the rural landscape, including local authorities, specialist rural police teams, residents, business owners and volunteers, and spark conversations which help to set the local police agenda for keeping our communities safe."



Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, addresses attendees at a police Barn Meet

\*Partner agencies include the National Farmers Union, Rights of Way Officers from Hertfordshire County Council, the Country Landowners and Businesses Association, Local Authority Environmental Officers and equine establishments.



Former Chief Constable, Andy Bliss, facing a packed audience

# Multi-agency checks drive criminals off the road



**In excess of 10,000 vehicles using rural roads have been stopped and checked for criminal activity and safety, since Operation Agrarian was launched in East Herts in 2008.**

The multi-agency operation aims to target criminals using the road network in East Herts.

Throughout the year several agencies joined officers from the East Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team, supported by the Roads Policing Unit, to carry out 'days of action' on key roads around Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford. Agencies included the HMRC (government revenue and customs) Hidden Economy Unit, HMRC Fuel Testing Unit, Trading Standards, DVSA (driver and vehicle standards), UK Border Agency, the Motor Insurance Bureau and East Herts Council.

Vehicles stopped and checked included goods vehicles, agricultural vehicles, vans and cars. The drivers are escorted to an examination site, where numerous checks to the vehicles and the driver's relevant paperwork, including insurance, are carried out.

## Prohibition Notices

Throughout the year vehicles are seized and numerous prohibition notices, fines and summons have been issued.

Sergeant Duncan Wallace, who leads Operation Agrarian, said: "It has been successfully running in East Herts for many years and enables us to gather intelligence about who is travelling through the area, as well as detecting and preventing crime and ensuring drivers and vehicles are safe to drive. It also allows us to disrupt the activities of criminals coming into East Herts from other areas, denying them the use of the road network.

"I would like to thank the many law-abiding road users for their patience and understanding in supporting these operations."

## And in the north...

In North Herts, Op Aquo tackles the issues of fly-tipping and vehicles carrying scrap metal.

Working in conjunction with North Herts District Council's Enforcement team, officers target transits and small work vans in specific rural areas that have suffered fly-tipping. Vehicles are pulled over and their loads checked, along with the safety of the vehicle and waste carriers licences. Frequently, staff from DVSA will join the team and carry out vehicle checks, including dipping the fuel tanks to check for illegal use of red diesel.

Operation Gelding is a specific scrap metal operation which involves a team of officers checking vehicles around the Hitchin area. It is often run with partner agencies including DVSA, the council Enforcement Team, the Environment Agency, DVLA and HMRC.

Officers use a mobile ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) camera and vehicles carrying scrap metal are stopped and checked.

Sergeant Guy Westwood, from North Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team, said: "fly-tipping not only blights the rural landscape, and has serious environmental implications, it is also costly to remove. Working with the council Enforcement Team on these operations allows us to monitor the activity of waste carriers and scrap dealers in the area to identify criminal activity and ensure the safe and legal carriage of these types of materials."

## Down south...

In Hertsmere, Operation Carm targets the anti-social use of off-road bikes and quad bikes. Last year a teenage boy, who was riding across fields in Bushey, was reported for traffic offences. Another multi-agency operation targets transit tippers, making sure they have a waste carriers licence.

# Tack Security-Marking at Tyrrells Fun Day

The Rural Operation Support Team (ROST), along with PCSOs Chris Brabrook and Robyn Allen from the Royston Safer Neighbourhood Team, recently saddled up for a charity fun day at Tyrrells Equine Clinic near Royston, to carry out free tack security marking.

Using special equipment, officers can permanently but discretely mark leather items, allowing them to be reunited with their rightful owners should they ever be lost or stolen and then recovered.

The team regularly attends equine events, horse shows and large livery yards to carry out this service free of charge. Combined with signs at a yard, announcing that tack is security marked, it can help to deter thieves and burglars from having a go.

DC Amanda Matthews, from ROST, said: "We would always recommend riders and owners get their tack security marked. Saddles and bridles are usually expensive items and can be an easy target for thieves. Always make sure your tack is as secure as possible, keeping it in a very secure tack room, or better still, at home."

If you would like to arrange for the team to attend your event or yard please contact DC Amanda Matthews on 101 or email:

[Amanda.matthews@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Amanda.matthews@herts.pnn.police.uk)



Rost officers preparing their crime prevention stand

# The Sad Death of 'Gertie' the Sandon Goose

The unexplained death of a well-known village goose made national media headlines in April and raised questions about the protection status of these birds in society.

the goose's body exhumed to try to find out exactly how it had died. After tests by the Royal Veterinary College it was confirmed that Gertie had died as a result of an unexplained blunt force trauma to the head and no evidence of having been shot.

Despite significant media coverage, no witnesses came forward and no further information about how the goose had met its death came to light.

Because Gertie was a domesticated species (albeit living wild), his death is not considered an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and, because Gertie did not have an owner, there was no 'victim of crime' to prove an offence of criminal damage. Officers therefore had no option but to close the case.

"This was a very difficult case and highlights the problems we often have defining rural incidents of this nature," explained Sergeant Jamie Bartlett from ROST. "Though there are laws in place to protect wildlife, they do not cover every species in every eventuality.

"The villagers of Sandon were extremely upset by the death of their village mascot, who features on the village sign and had made a nearby phone box his home. We investigated the incident as far as we could, however, without witnesses or a clear cause of death, we were left with no choice but to close the case."



The body of the goose, known as Grumpy Gertie, was found floating in the village pond in Sandon, North Herts, in February. The gander's death sparked rumours that he was killed in a drive-by shooting by a gang in a 4x4.

Officers from the Constabulary's Rural Operational Support team were called in to investigate the incident and even had



# St Albans PC is 'Rural Police Officer of the Year'

**“Displaying an exceptional commitment to rural policing,” was how PC Jane Flemons was described at the Chief Constable’s 2015 Annual Staff Award Ceremony. Held towards the end of every year, the event recognises outstanding work done by members of Constabulary staff.**

PC Flemons was awarded the title of ‘Rural Police Officer of the Year’ for her commitment, professionalism and excellent results.

Across the City and District of St Albans, a significant problem of continual fly-tipping arose and a belief within the rural community was that this blight to the countryside was being ignored from an enforcement perspective.

Jane did not hesitate in setting up meetings with individual land owners to discuss and understand the issues. She went on to develop a deployment strategy (utilising the support of farmers and specialist machinery) for using covert cameras.

Jane expanded her work to support St Albans City and District Council and has also passed her guidance to other recognised bodies and authorities across the county. Jane’s positive approach and investigative skills have led to the successful conviction so far of seven offenders for fly-tipping, with a matter also pending trial in the Crown Court. Financial penalties imposed as a result of Jane’s work have seen offenders being made to pay over £6,000 to date.

Jane planned and implemented training days across the entire district over a five week period, providing hands-on experience to officers about legislative requirements in dealing with those carrying waste materials.

Jane was also responsible for once again arranging a fantastically successful Barn Meet. This forum enabled local farmers to meet and engage with the Chief Constable and PCC along with other rural officers from St Albans, neighbouring districts and ROST.

Jane is now the full-time Rural Officer for St Albans. She has recently prepared a successful business case to acquire and put to immediate use an under-used police-owned 4x4 vehicle. This has again provided further reassurance to the more remote and rural members of the community.

Her efforts continue and Jane is now working to reduce the impact of fly-grazing across the district of St Albans. This sensitive area has seen her continue to hold the respect of the travelling community.

She is currently working with the Environment Agency about an emerging poaching issue in Wheathampstead, which has already seen an immediate positive impact due to her involvement.

Police and Crime Commissioner, David Lloyd, said: “Jane is the epitome of what we all want to see from a rural police officer - someone who understands and is prepared to tackle rural problems head-on. She should be congratulated for her efforts and thoroughly deserves her award.”

**The 2016 Rural Officer of the Year was PC Phil Tuck who is based in Hertsmere. The next edition of Rural Beat will focus on Phil and the work that earned him this award.**



Pc Jane Flemons with former Chief Constable Andy Bliss

## The best security marking

**The Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) strongly recommends using the CESAR equipment registration and security scheme which uses Datatag hi-tech security markings.**

It includes unique tamper-proof identification stickers, tags, Datadots, and Datatag DNA dots that act as a powerful deterrent to theft and is an invaluable aid in recovery, in the event of theft.

Registered machines are four times less likely to be stolen and six times more likely to be recovered if stolen. It can be used on items ranging from tractors to quad bikes, horse boxes to power tools.

**For further information visit [www.datatag.co.uk/cesar](http://www.datatag.co.uk/cesar) or call police via 101 and ask for the ROST.**

# Stomping around East Herts to keep crime down

Officers from Operation Stomp have been out and about in rural East Herts over the past year as part of their on-going campaign to reduce acquisitive crime, in particular from dwellings, outbuildings and vehicles.



Supported by staff from East Herts District Council (including the Dog Warden), Herts Fire and Rescue Service, and other partner organisations, officers have visited villages across rural East Herts offering advice and information to local residents about how to keep themselves and their property safe.

Fire officers checked smoke alarms and gave advice to local residents about fire safety, while police checked home security measures and identified vulnerable properties. They offered crime prevention advice, including how to avoid rogue traders, and talked to local residents about their concerns.

To complement this action, officers conducted high visibility stops on vehicles travelling through the area on the day of action. This gave further opportunities to

engage with local people and gather useful intelligence.

“These operations have been very well received by the rural communities and we hope to see a reduction in crime as a result,” said Sergeant Duncan Wallace. “Operation Stomp is about identifying vulnerability and preventing people becoming victims of crime. Properties in remote locations, small villages and hamlets can be particularly vulnerable.

“Rural areas are targeted by criminals, and we want people to accept their own responsibilities too - taking extra care and precautions to protect themselves and their property. We hope by visiting some of the more vulnerable areas ourselves, checking property, highlighting problems and talking to home owners, we can really get the message across and prevent more of these offences occurring.

“As well as house-to-house visits, we will continue to carry out high visibility overt patrols in the area, which I hope will reassure the rural community that we take rural crime and criminality very seriously. This reassurance will, I hope go some way to reducing the fear and perception of crime that can be disproportionately high in rural areas”



If you live in East Herts and would like a visit or require more information or advice, please contact the East Herts Rural Safer Neighbourhood team on 101 or email: [snteasthertsrural@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:snteasthertsrural@herts.pnn.police.uk)

## Christmas Tree Theft in Dacorum

Officers in Dacorum tackled an unusual rural crime back in November 2015, when around £14,000 worth of Christmas trees were stolen from Horseback Lane near Wigginton. This was the second time thieves had targeted this site, and on this occasion, they took between 80 and 90 trees. The large site fell into both Hertfordshire and Thames Valley police areas.

After an initial investigation, covert cameras were placed at the location and, a short time later, two men were caught behaving suspiciously on the Thames Valley side of the site. Working closely with Thames Valley Police, a joint operation was set up after the men caught on camera were identified.

The two men were arrested in the Aylesbury area and a

quantity of Christmas trees were recovered nearby. Scenes of Crime Officers from Hertfordshire attended the scene and were able to match up the recovered trees to the stumps left behind, due to the offenders using a hand saw to cut the trees giving each one a unique cut.

One of the men, who was from Berkhamsted, was charged with theft. He appeared at Central Bucks Magistrates Court in, 2016, but was cleared.

Commenting on the case PC Steve Hunneysett from the Berkhamsted and Tring Safer Neighbourhood Team said: “Although the prosecution was not successful on this occasion, this was a great example of how we can tackle rural crime. Using the special cameras we were able to record some suspects and then identify the stolen trees using Scenes of Crimes expertise. We are committed to our rural communities and businesses and will use whatever means possible to tackle rural crime.”

# Police Catch Fish Poachers in Ware

Two London anglers had penalties of over £450 each imposed at St Albans Magistrate Court in September 2016 for fishing without a rod licence and taking fish without permission at a trout fishery in Ware. These offences are in contravention of national byelaws and schedule one of the Theft Act.

The men were caught by the Police fishing at night and were each fined £330 (plus £127 costs & £33 victim surcharge).

Neighbourhood Sergeant Duncan Wallace said: "My officers make regular patrols of the area and spotted the men fishing at the lakes one evening. They checked their documents and obtained photographic evidence. We then passed this information onto a fishing bailiff from the Environment Agency who we work closely with."

Environment Manager Debbie Jones continued: "We check licences across all fisheries in Hertfordshire, and work in partnership with fishery owners, and the Police to detect and deter fisheries crime. People who don't buy a licence are cheating other anglers and the future of the sport. The Environment Agency relies on the income from rod licences to continue the important work we do to protect fish stocks, improve fisheries and encourage more people to take up fishing."



If you are caught fishing without a rod licence you risk a criminal conviction and a fine up to £2500. There is no excuse – Annual rod licences for trout and coarse fishing remain at £5 for 12 to 16 year olds, £18 for senior and disabled concessions and £27 for non-concessions. Children under 12 can fish for free. Licences are easy to buy from the Post Office website or by phone on 03448005386 prior to fishing. Anglers should always ensure they have permission to fish at a fishery and check Environment Agency byelaws.

Last year, Environment Agency officers checked more than 62,000 licences and prosecuted more than 1900 licence cheats. Between them, they were ordered to pay fines and costs in excess of £600,000. To help crack down on unlicensed fishing the Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal activity by calling 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

**THIS IS MY COMMUNITY.**

**RICHARD**  
GAMEKEEPER AND SPECIAL CONSTABLE

**THIS IS MY BEAT.**

**"There's so much that you don't realise as a civilian, so much that the police think about and plan for, things they are involved with. Every time you're on duty there's a surprise because you always come across something different."**

Become a Rural Special Constable like Richard and you'll work alongside regular police officers doing everything regular police officers do. Patrolling the streets. Helping the public. Attending crime scenes. Arresting people. Above all, you'll provide a reassuring presence in your local area and help keep Hertfordshire safe.

So if you want to play a greater role in your community, you don't need to change jobs. You just need to be aged 18 or over and willing to give up at least 16 hours of your free time a month. Find out more about becoming a Special Constable at [hertspolicecareers.co.uk/special-constables](http://hertspolicecareers.co.uk/special-constables)

[@herts\\_specials](https://twitter.com/herts_specials)

— David Lloyd —  
**Police and Crime Commissioner**  
for Hertfordshire

**HERTFORDSHIRE**  
**CONSTABULARY**

# Protect Your Oil

**The theft of heating oil from tanks outside rural properties continues to be a problem during winter months. The Constabulary is advising residents, who heat their homes in this way, to take extra precautions for the storage of their oil – before winter sets in.**

ROST Sergeant Jamie Bartlett said: “When this crime takes place, it’s not only the loss of oil which causes a problem for

residents. Thieves will also often damage tanks in the process of removing the oil and leaking oil can contaminate both soil and groundwater. Homeowners are then responsible for the cost of a specialist clean-up operation.”

Heating oil tanks can contain thousands of pounds worth of oil, so it makes sense to take all possible measures to protect them.

There are a few things you can do to make your tank or supply more secure:

- **Control switches** - these switches control the flow of oil and should be turned off and the electricity supply isolated when the tank is not in use.
- **Padlocks** - it’s worth spending a little more on good quality locks, such as close shackle padlocks, which offer most resistance to the commonly used burglar’s tools, such as bolt croppers.
- **Oil level gauges** - remote gauges are available which will sound an alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops, or falls below a quarter full, and can be located anywhere in adjacent buildings. There are different versions available costing between £70 and £100.
- **Security lights** - controlled lighting can make any property a much harder target for the thief. Low energy ‘dusk ‘til dawn’ lights positioned close to the tank are cheap and an effective deterrent.

Further information about protecting yourself against heating oil theft can be found at [www.herts.police.uk](http://www.herts.police.uk) in the rural crime pages.

## Rural crime prevention signs available

To help protect farm land, livestock, wildlife, heritage sites, outbuildings, sheds, plant, agricultural machinery and power tools the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) has created new crime prevention signs.

Once displayed in a relevant rural location, the signs act as a deterrent to would-be-thieves and criminals and have already proved to be a great success.

ROST has two signs available - the first aims to deter hare courses and poachers. The second is targeted at criminals

intent on causing crimes we see in the countryside, such as theft, burglary, criminal damage, fly-tipping and metal theft.

If you think you can put a sign to good use on your land or buildings, you can obtain either or both these signs by contacting ROST on 101 or by email [ROST@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ROST@herts.pnn.police.uk)



## Tweets are not just for twitchers



Keep up-to-date with rural crime issues by following the Rural Operational Support Team (ROST) on its own dedicated Twitter account @HertsPolRural.



ROST also keeps members of the equine community updated about relevant crimes and issues with a dedicated Facebook site: **Herts Police Rural & Equine**. If you use Facebook why not visit the site and ‘like’ it?

All Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) in Hertfordshire have their own Twitter accounts which feature updates from both rural and urban locations. To see your local team’s Tweets, visit the force website [www.herts.police.uk](http://www.herts.police.uk) (Safer Neighbourhoods) and search for your area where you will find their Twitter feed.

If you are a Twitter fan with your own account, you can follow any Herts Police team.

If you have any feedback about Rural Beat or would like to see a particular rural crime or subject covered in the next edition of this magazine, please email: [corp.comm@herts.pnn.police.uk](mailto:corp.comm@herts.pnn.police.uk)