

Rural crime

OUR ASK



A consistent and coordinated response to rural crime across government and police forces, including fair funding for rural policing, a dedicated rural crime team in every police force in the country and the formation of a cross-departmental rural crime task force to address the failures in dealing with rural crime.

Why it's needed

Rural crime is unique in its nature and there is increasing evidence that organised criminal groups (OCGs) are operating in rural areas, targeting vulnerable remote communities.

Policing rural areas is challenging given the range of different crime types including fly-tipping, dog attacks on livestock, and hare coursing as well as thefts of vehicles, machinery and livestock.

Policing costs are higher among rural forces as they cannot benefit from economies of scale due to the need to serve more dispersed, low-density populations. The scale, cost, social impact and other effects of crime in rural areas are underestimated, under-reported and not fully understood.

Rural crime has seen substantial increases in recent years. This has

had both financial and emotional effects on rural communities. Rural crime adds to the financial toll taken on farmer and grower businesses in recent years and often leaves businesses without vital equipment and even livestock.

Rural theft cost the UK approximately £49.5 million in 2022, according to NFU Mutual's Rural Crime Report 2023, with quad bike and ATV theft rising by 34% and livestock theft increasing by 8.7%.

The exceptional aspect of rural crime is that farm businesses are often also the houses and private spaces of the business owners. This means that rural crime can often leave farmers and growers feeling scared and unsafe in their own homes, a place where they should feel secure.

The current Home Office police funding formula simply does not reflect the costs of policing rural areas. It makes little or no concession to the fact that policing a rural community, with greater distances to travel, will cost more than policing a densely populated urban location.



What it would deliver

A consistent and coordinated response to rural crime would create an increasingly difficult environment for criminals to operate in.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has established the National Rural Crime Unit to promote intelligence sharing and increased collaboration among police forces covering rural areas. The NFU welcomes this development, but a joined-up approach to rural crime should involve all the key stakeholders coming together to agree on a coordinated approach.

The NFU would like to see a national rural crime task force involving the NPCC and the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners, together with key government departments and relevant non-departmental public bodies, including Defra, Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Ministry of Justice and the Sentencing Council. Sharing knowledge would help increase each organisation's understanding of, and tactics for tackling, rural crime.

The mental health benefits for rural communities which would result from more consistent and

coordinated rural policing cannot be overstated. It would allow people living in these communities to feel secure in their own homes and not have to face threats and intimidation from these criminals.

Moreover, the National Rural Crime Network has found preliminary evidence that the financial benefit that rural crime provides to organised criminal groups (OCGs) has helped fund other illicit activities, such as the drug trade in Wiltshire. Should the police take action to tackle crimes that fund OCGs, better protection can be provided not just for rural communities, but for the wider British public too.

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Produced by:
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December 2023



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