



RESPONSE TO HAMPSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL SCRUTINY

**“Rural Crime - Thematic Scrutiny Report
Recommendations”**

**From the Police and Crime Commissioner for
Hampshire, Mr Simon Hayes.**

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**Prepared
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Police and Crime Commissioner's response to Police and Crime Panel recommendations:

3.1

- a. The genuine desire and commitment from parish councils to collate and disseminate information to local communities on behalf of the police should be explored in greater detail by the PCC as the lead for engaging with local communities.**

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Simon Hayes (hereafter referred to as the Commissioner), frequently undertakes engagement events with local communities and encourages Hampshire Constabulary to be more proactive in this respect; frequently, and if appropriate, these activities are undertaken on a joint basis. A number of Parish Councils are already in receipt of newsletters and bulletins from their local Country Watch team or their local Neighbourhood Policing team. These newsletters / bulletins are either e-mailed to residents or copies are printed and placed at focal points within rural communities, e.g. notice boards or community shops. In the interests of both economy and effectiveness, all communications will be channelled through the Hampshire Alert system from April 2015. The drive to encourage local residents to sign up to this electronic communication system has been underway in rural areas since its launch at the New Forest Show in July 2014.

The Commissioner also considers Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) extremely valuable in this role. Neighbourhood Watch schemes are well represented in rural areas; in many instances the local co-ordinator attends Parish Council meetings and is therefore able to bring an overview of rural crime and ASB issues to the attention of the Council.

In both instances the information about locally-focussed crime trends that is available for dissemination to affected communities is only as good as the reports of crimes by the public to the police. The Commissioner is pleased to state there is no diminution in the number of reports from the public: this is reflected in the various newsletters and bulletins. Increased reporting of crime often reflects confidence by the public in the police.

Invitations to speak at Parish and Town Council meetings about local policing, crime and ASB issues are frequently received by the Commissioner. Either he, the Deputy Commissioner or one of his Assistants will always attend. The Commissioner believes this input is well received. A recent example was a meeting in the Upton Grey and Candovers beat area which was attended by more than 300 local people – this was run jointly by several of the local Parish Councils. Both the Commissioner and ACC Pryde attended and both were supported by members of their respective teams.

- b. The PCC should work with the Constabulary to introduce crime prevention toolkits for local communities that empower them to take greater responsibility for protecting their own area from rural crime. This task could be co-ordinated by Country Watch in order to ensure consistency across the two Counties.**

Country Watch officers work closely with Crime Prevention Advisors to produce a number of rural toolkits. These are available internally on Hampshire Constabulary's intranet for rural officers to self-brief, and to print out to take with them when deployed to a particular type of incident. A number of them have also been e-mailed externally through Country

Watch and Neighbourhood Team distribution lists. The toolkits are also available to the public at <http://www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/advice-and-information/rural-crime/> and provide a range of crime prevention advice on topics including estate security, equipment security, counter terrorism, wildlife crime, and heritage crime. Country Watch officers offer site surveys to rural premises to provide crime prevention advice and suggest appropriate security measures.

- c. The PCC, through his role to engage and build confidence in local communities, should explore holding community awareness projects – organising events locally that assist local communities to develop their own crime prevention schemes, put faces to names of rural police officers, and encourage the use of technology, how to register and access it.**

The re - organisation of frontline policing under Hampshire Constabulary's Operational Change Programme (OCP) is beginning to be delivered. It is planned all personnel will be in their new roles by 31 March 2015. It is a fundamental expectation of the OCP, in the Neighbourhood and Prevention strand in particular, that community engagement events will be held. These will provide an opportunity for rural community members to identify and engage with their local officers. This will assist in setting local community priorities which affect the whole community and not just a few individuals. These events will be used to further encourage rural community members to sign up to Hampshire Alert. An app is currently being developed which will enable officers and PCSOs to sign people up whilst on patrol, and to send out messages relating to 'hot' reported incidents.

- d. The PCC should explore with the Constabulary how to improve communication with local communities to encourage the reporting of rural crime. The Commissioner should work with the Chief Constable to highlight the need for the Constabulary to agree minimum standards of investigation and feedback, and to communicate these to communities to ensure that there is reassurance locally about what is guaranteed to happen if a crime is reported.**

Rural communities are now generally more likely to report rural crime than they were previously. There is an increased confidence in policing and work continues to ensure communities are informed of the action taken following similar / previous reports. Although Hampshire Constabulary will continue to strive to deliver an excellent service, out of financial necessity the way the Hampshire Police Area is policed is being re-organised – thus the way the service is delivered will change.

Every report of a crime will be assessed on its merits and will be graded by the Control Room. It will either receive a graded deployment appropriate to the information provided, or it will be sent to the Resolution Centre for further telephone-based enquiries to be conducted. Clearly in times of financial restraint the Commissioner cannot guarantee that every crime will be investigated by an officer on the ground but the Commissioner will do all that he can to ensure community confidence is not lost during this process, and through scrutiny of the Chief Constable he will encourage continued engagement with local communities whenever possible.

- e. The PCC should continue to lead on partnership working with other agencies that have a shared responsibility for rural crime prevention and detection. An item for discussion by this group could be the use of shared communications and branding to give communities confidence that all partners are working towards the same aim, and receive the same message from all relevant organisations. This could involve expanded use of the Country watch brand and website as a portal for information signposting.**

The Commissioner's engagement with partner organisations takes place in 3 main forums: through the Rural Partnership Group which is attended by representatives from across the Criminal Justice System and from member-based organisations; at the recently formed Police & Crime Alliance at which the Commissioner meets with the Leaders of the 4 top-tier local authorities and heads of public sector service delivery organisations; and at the Community Safety Alliance at which the Commissioner will meet with the Chairs of all 14 Community Safety Partnerships. Clearly the agenda in the Rural Partnership Group focuses purely on rural crime and ASB issues but the other 2 forums provide an opportunity to ensure that all organisations are providing a joined-up service to all communities across the 2 counties – especially from a resourcing and funding perspective. With the Chief Constable, the Commissioner would expect to set the strategic direction and then allow that direction to be turned into operational practice at a more local level with consistency of delivery being ensured by the local District [police] Commanders.

- f. Better links should be made with local authorities through the PCC to ensure that urgent works requested by the police to tackle rural crime are recognised and expedited, as part of a partnership approach to this issue.**

The Commissioner is supportive of this recommendation and acknowledges the evidence which underpins it. The Commissioner will use his position to remind and influence partners of their roles, duties and responsibilities to help tackle and reduce rural crime. This can only be achieved through partnership working. APCC (Policing and Safer Communities), is a member of Hampshire Constabulary's Rural Partnership Group, and will remind partners of the importance of partnership working and undertaking tasks requested by the police which may appear to be minor (such as putting up barriers) but are crucial in the fight against rural crime.

- g. The PCC should continue to liaise with appropriate partners within the Criminal Justice System to ensure that a holistic approach is continued to be taken towards rural crimes and incidents, but also that victims and their communities are satisfied that penalties are equitable to the impact of rural crimes committed.**

The Commissioner has a good working relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which has a dedicated CPS lawyer for all wildlife, rural and environmental prosecutions for Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. Through the Rural Partnership Group input has been provided to the Magistrates Association to reinforce the impact of rural crime when considering sentencing.

The Commissioner uses a variety of both formal and informal means to ensure communities hear about the penalties imposed through the courts but clearly cannot influence the courts in handing out harsher sentences. However, a recent Appeal case in the Crown Court (where 2 defendants appealed the severity of their fines) was not upheld and the presiding judge said that "...illegal hare coursing causes disruption and misery to country life and needs to be brought under control...". The Commissioner feels the message is getting through.

- h. The PCC should continue to promote the use of neighbourhood watch in local communities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, encouraging volunteers to help protect their area against rural crime. As part of this, the PCC should evaluate any commissioned services from Neighbourhood Watch to ensure that funding is able to support the identification and recruitment of volunteers.**

- i. **The Neighbourhood Watch could be encouraged to apply for small grant funding from the PCC, to assist neighbourhood watch areas who may be struggling to attract volunteers or appropriately train them, in order to increase the number of these well-regarded networks across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.**

(Response to recommendations h and i combined below)

The Commissioner cannot under-estimate the importance he attaches to NHW – the Commissioner’s response to Recommendation 3.1.a also addresses this. NHW plays a key role in acting as “eyes and ears” in rural areas. Hampshire Constabulary’s Country Watch officers assist in filling the gap in areas where traditional NHW does not exist due to the remoteness and isolated locations of premises. The two way flow of information throughout any watch scheme is paramount to ensuring its success.

The Commissioner has recently commissioned a service on behalf on the HINWA with the aim of helping them to increase the number of schemes across the Hampshire Policing Area – the service will compile a package of information, tips, and suggestions to be available for roll out throughout Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to support new NHW schemes and enhance existing ones. It will focus on how to engage with and set up schemes within “hard-to-reach” communities such as BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), groups, and social housing areas but its outcomes will be available to be used in any under-represented area including in rural communities.