

# Rural Matters



Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Winter 2024/25



In this issue:



**Kent  
Police**



Rural Crime Action Week



Equine eyes and ears




Mark your property



Plus the latest news on rural and environmental policing in Kent




# Welcome to Rural Matters

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

**Rural Inspector**  
  
Inspector Tom Mepstead

**Rural Sergeants**  
  
Sergeant Darren Walshaw  
  
Sergeant Ross Haybourne

**Rural Crime Co-ordinator**  
  
Doug Robertson

**North Division**


- PC Marc Pennicott
- PC Paul Williams
- PC Beth Ninnim
- PCSO John Cork
- PCSO Christian Ward-Davies

**West Division**


- PC Anna Verrall
- PC Luke Jordan
- PC Tom Smith
- PCSO Amy Best
- PCSO Millie Smith

**East Division**

- PC Harry Callaghan
- PC Mike Sutton
- PC Amy White
- PCSO Debbie Fields
- PCSO Ian Norton






Email your Rural Task Force team  
[rural.task.force@kent.police.uk](mailto:rural.task.force@kent.police.uk)



More rural contact information, see back page.

## Report non-urgent crime online

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

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

**Crimestoppers.**  
**0800 555 111**  
100% anonymous. Always.

## X account

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

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

Follow for the latest news and information.



# Latest news

## Threat to gamekeeper among arrests during Rural Crime Action Week

Officers from Kent Police's Rural Task Force worked with local communities during Rural Crime Action Week.

The team is dedicated to protecting rural communities in Kent all year round. The action week, from 21 October to 27 October 2024, focused extra activity across the country on crimes specifically affecting rural areas, including seasonal activity like poaching and hare coursing.

In Kent there were 10 arrests with two people charged with threatening a gamekeeper, warnings issued to suspected poachers and 14 vehicles seized.

Community engagement events were held by rural Police Community Support Officers, including rural surveys and crime prevention advice to residents and businesses.

Rural Task Force Sergeant

Ross Haybourne said: 'The team had several busy shifts during Rural Crime Action Week, but it was very much business as usual. They are out on patrol every day in the rural areas of Kent to target and disrupt criminal activity.'

'People who live in rural communities often feel isolated and vulnerable and those involved in rural crime rely on threats and intimidation for their actions not to be reported to the police.'

'However we remain committed to working with rural communities to make them feel safer and actively clamp down on the criminals who target them. Weeks like these are important to build strong relationships with members of the rural community and help us deter and detect offences.'



- More than 100 addresses visited in Aldington and Sandwich where officers provided advice on rogue traders and scams. They also gave a presentation to Ashford Young Farmers Group.
- Four men issued with community protection warnings after being stopped in Gravesend on suspicion of poaching and found carrying catapults.
- A call about suspected poaching in Romney Marsh saw a vehicle linked to previous poaching incidents seized. Three men seen in a field with a lurcher dog were issued with a community protection warning in relation to poaching. A CPW was also issued to a man for poaching offences after birds were catapulted in Canterbury.
- Officers attended Ashford cattle market to provide crime prevention advice and property marking and livestock worrying dog DNA kits.

## Free property marking for rural community

Rural Task Force officers offer free property marking to help the rural community protect equipment and make it easier to identify and return stolen items.

Officers have been using a new machine to mark metal, plastic and leather with the property name and postcode. Marking can be done at a farm or area where equipment is stored. The service is completely free.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Officers have already marked various items. Marking helps us identify stolen goods and return recovered items to their rightful owners. We understand the upset and financial impact that the loss of stolen machinery and other items can cause and urge



people to get in touch and get important items marked.'

If you are interested in having property marked free of charge email [rural.task.force@kent.police.uk](mailto:rural.task.force@kent.police.uk)

Further tips on how to protect property and equipment can be found on the Kent Police website [kent.police.uk](http://kent.police.uk) rural crime prevention page.

## Farm Watch – quick response to suspicious activity

The FarmWatch alert system is an effective way to share information with Rural Task Force officers directly and has over 1,800 members.

The app ensures information is passed on quickly so officers can act swiftly – resulting in stolen property recovered fast and offenders stopped.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Ensure any reports made of stolen property include full details. Visit the Kent Police [website](http://kent.police.uk) for reporting and crime prevention advice.'

Anyone interested in joining their local FarmWatch group email the RTF at [rural.task.force@kent.police.uk](mailto:rural.task.force@kent.police.uk)

Farm Watch WhatsApp is a tool to share information directly with the team and not to be used to report crime.

Any crimes should be reported in the usual way; 999 if a crime is in progress or via the online crime reporting service on the Kent Police website.







## Horses stolen from stables reunited with owner

Officers have safely recovered two of three horses stolen from stables in West Kent.

After fencing was damaged by the suspected thieves the horses were taken from premises at Hartley near New Ash Green and led through a field onto Ash Road.

A public appeal was made and with help from the victim, officers from Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Task Force searched a location in Gravesend on 2 December, recovering two of the horses.

Sadly the third horse was found dead in an area of vegetation close to a fence line following a further search



in nearby areas.

Officers seized a horse trailer and patrols recovered two stolen motorbikes and a suspected stolen quad bike. The investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information should call the West Kent appeals line **01622 604100** ref **46/198687/24** or contact Crimestoppers anonymously 0800 555 111.

## Spate of motorcycle thefts – keep outbuildings secure



Bikes stolen from a barn near Maidstone

A spate of motorcycle thefts has prompted advice to owners to guard against burglars targeting sheds, outbuildings and garages.

In one week eight motorcycles were stolen in the Maidstone area, including five from an outbuilding between 24 November and 26 November in Weaving. They included Honda, KTM and Husqvarna bikes.

Police are also investigating the theft of three motorcycles in a separate incident days before, after a barn near Bearsted Road was broken into with BMW, Ducati and KTM bikes stolen.

### Security tips for motorcycle owners:

- Enhance security with garage and shed alarms as well as low level dusk to dawn lighting.
- Use a chain lock through the back wheel to secure the bike, with the lock taut, to a ground anchor.
- A disc lock will help secure the front brake disc and a grip lock secure the brake and throttle controls.
- A cover can make bikes less attractive to thieves and also prove a time-consuming obstacle.
- Consider fitting a Thatcham-rated 1 or 2 alarm system with tracking, immobilisation, anti-grab and movement sensors.
- Property marking will make it more difficult for criminals to sell parts on, and less attractive to steal. It will also help police identify parts and return recovered stolen bikes.

## Tracker helps trace £12,500 worth of stolen equipment

The value of installing tracking devices was proved again when a roller and Ifor Williams trailer valued at £12,500, stolen from a hire company, were located and recovered after a tracker activation.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Trackers and other crime prevention measures significantly increase the success of recovering stolen plant machinery and preventing thefts.'

For rural related crime prevention advice check the Kent Police website.'

## Five horses seized – ensure animals are kept secure

A total of five horses were seized by officers in November.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'For the safety of road users and horses if initial enquires at the scene cannot identify an owner the horse will be seized and the significant costs charged to Kent Police will be passed onto the owner before a horse is returned.'

Equine owners ensure your horses are secure, fences are maintained, and gates are padlocked shut.'

## Equine eyes and ears – volunteers helping keep communities safe

A dedicated team of Kent Police volunteers are immediately visible from their unique vantage point and able to patrol in rural areas harder to reach for other officers.

Kent Police has a strong focus on volunteer involvement with the community through its successful Citizens in Policing programme.

Among those involved are CPV Equine volunteers like Liz Roberts on her horse 'Simple Jolene,' who are able to engage with the public and be eyes and ears to suspicious activity as they patrol in their areas, often in hard to access rural spaces.

Kent Police Citizens in Policing Trainer PC Martyn Tulk said: 'Our Equine CPVs carry out a really important role in rural areas. They can reach more inaccessible areas, acting as eyes and ears. They are visible to the community and as horse owners themselves they are used to the countryside, able to quickly observe things that may be suspicious and engage effectively with members of the community because of their experience.'

'We are looking to recruit more volunteers for this role so we can effectively cover a wider geographical area across the county. It is a very rewarding role and one which has real benefits to both those involved and those they interact with. They send important information, which helps us develop intelligence, and their community engagement is superb.'

Liz, who is Estate Administrator at Lees Court Estate, Faversham when not volunteering, has been an Equine CPV for two years.

She said: 'Simply Jolene or 'Simps,' is ridden out most days within her role as a volunteer Kent Police horse! We can travel out to areas which may require a little more 'visibility' or 'presence' and can also quickly tackle rural landscapes, but more importantly, we can really engage with the public and offer support and reassurance to those we meet.'

'I ride mainly around areas of high public access in forestry commission land, as well as bridleways and land made accessible to me by local landowners.'

Liz not only volunteers and manages her daytime job, which she's held for 25 years, she also recently qualified and competed in the Cavago Championships run by British Dressage alongside elite



The equine volunteers can reach inaccessible rural areas. Pictured left to right Equine volunteers Liz Roberts and Shannon Lunt on their horses

riders from the military and other forces. She said: 'I was warmly welcomed, speaking to others of the CPV Equine role being developed by Kent Police. Simply Jolene performed exceptionally and I'm incredibly proud of what we achieved together. It's an honour to represent the volunteer police community.'

Liz and 'Simps' have a strong bond. Liz said: 'There is a little fairy tale here. Sold in Ireland as a four-year-old at the

prestigious Go For Gold sales after a year she was for auction at Ashford Horse Sales. Not intending to buy a horse, somehow the hammer fell to me for 17hh of rather wild Irish Sports Horse. Weak, scared and really rather a challenge, but also kind and loving, after a slow start to rebuild her strength and her trust, she's just turned 12 and this year has been her best competitively and of course enjoying our volunteering role together.'

## Equine volunteers – join the team to offer a unique community engagement role

Kent Police Equine volunteers own and ride their own horses or have access to a horse they regularly ride.

They receive full training, covering Emergency First Aid, support for riding remotely and input on crime types affecting rural areas such as fly tipping, animal cruelty and poaching, nuisance dog incidents, theft and property damage and outstanding missing people.

Professional independent assessment is carried out by a member of the British Horse Society, with accreditation funded by Kent Police. Hi-Viz is supplied to riders and horses to identify them as volunteers, different to mounted police officers, along with other equipment.

There is no minimum hours contribution, providing flexibility.

The role is attached to the Rural Task Force to provide a unique link to the rural and farming communities in the county.



For more information about volunteering roles within Kent Police use the QR code or visit [kent.police.uk/volunteering](http://kent.police.uk/volunteering)







## Poaching – report suspicious activity

Rural Task Force officers work with local farmers to investigate and advise on preventative measures around hare coursing offences and poaching, including the use of FarmWatch.

Officers recently investigated an incident where a game keeper spotted poachers and was then allegedly shot at with a catapult. The vehicle was identified and later stopped with two occupants arrested, and property seized.

Using local knowledge officers patrolled a known poaching location and stopped a vehicle. A search revealed two air rifles, catapults and ball bearings (pictured above) which were seized and the occupants dealt with for poaching offences. Kent Police is part of a 7 Forces agreement with Essex, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Norfolk police forces to 'act as one' to deal with offenders.

Laws which came into effect in 2023 introduced new offences including trespass with the intention of using a dog to pursue hares; increases to maximum penalties and court powers to disqualify convicted offenders from keeping dogs.

**OPERATION GALILEO**

**ILLEGAL HARE COURSING**

## Rare new tractor stolen from barn

Police are looking for information to trace two high value tractors stolen from a barn.

One of the tractors, a bright blue New Holland, model T3.60LP, is brand new and believed to be the only one of its type in the country. It has a vehicle identification number (VIN) of ELRT360LEPA401063.

The other tractor is a red Massey Ferguson, model 1747A.

Images have been issued of the tractors stolen during a burglary close to Stone Street, Seal near Sevenoaks between 7 and 8 November 2024.

Investigating officers are appealing to anyone who may recognise the tractors, or been offered them for sale, to contact them on the West Kent appeals line on **01622 604100**, quoting reference **46/189618/24** or Crimestoppers anonymously 0800 555 111 or via the online form.



## Port action to detect stolen vehicles sees hundreds checked

Hundreds of vehicles were stopped and stolen property recovered in a two day operation at Dover Port.

The action by the Rural Task Force working with the National Rural Crime Unit and Port of Dover Police follows two successful operations, including later hours, last summer, which included checking for stolen plant, vehicles and farm machinery suspected of being taken out of the country.

The latest operation across two dates in November at the port resulted in hundreds of vehicles being stopped and checked, crime prevention advice provided and stolen property recovered.

This included a cloned Toyota Hilux, stolen a couple



of weeks earlier. The two occupants of the vehicle were arrested.

Across the operations in 2024 there have been six arrests, eight vehicles seized, of which three were stolen, 17 traffic related offences processed and significant intelligence obtained about

criminal activity.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Ross Haybourne said: 'We are continuing to work with our partners from other police forces including the Port of Dover, to tackle the theft of plant and farm machinery as well as high value vehicles.

'We are targeting those that seek to use Kent to facilitate the removal of stolen machinery into Europe as well as reacting to live intelligence from various avenues. During our deployments we have seized numerous vehicles and vehicle parts which have been stolen from across the UK.'



## Beware rogue traders – suspect arrested after three victims reported

Rogue Traders are active in Kent and the Rural Task Force was recently involved with the arrest of a suspect associated with scamming three victims in the county.

Officers have issued advice to elderly and vulnerable people and their families to be on their guard and consider these points before agreeing to any work being undertaken at their property.

- Don't agree to work offered by unsolicited doorstep callers.
- Don't be rushed into making a decision.
- Don't pay cash, because it's not traceable, or be persuaded to be taken to the bank or immediately transfer money.
- Don't rely on posts or recommendations on social media or trader approval platforms without doing your own research.
- Don't be swayed by glossy flyers or impressive websites as they may not show the trader's own work.
- Check what guarantees and warranties are offered and get them in writing.
- Ask for references from previous customers.
- Do not deal with anyone who refuses to take payment via cheque or bank transfer.
- Get written receipts.



## Scammers who targeted elderly must pay back £100,000

Two rogue traders who scammed elderly victims claiming they needed unnecessary roof and chimney repairs have been ordered to pay back more than £100,000.

Sonny Maughan and Emmanuel Scarrott targeted vulnerable people in Herne Bay, Longfield and Greenwich charging thousands for work that wasn't needed.

They would often cause damage during their substandard work, for which they charged extortionate prices.

In a separate fraud, Scarrott approached a homeowner in Lordswood claiming to be a police officer investigating rogue traders. He told the victim he'd get a refund, but would need to pay money up front for legal representation and VAT. His family became suspicious, contacted Kent Police and an investigation led to the men's arrest in 2020.

They admitted conspiracy to commit fraud and were sentenced at Maidstone Crown Court, with Maughan formerly of Gravesend jailed for five years and Scarrott

formerly of Basildon for four in 2022.

Financial investigators from Kent Police's Proceeds of Crime Team continued to investigate their finances and went back to court on 22 October 2024 to apply for confiscation orders.

Maughan, 31, was ordered to repay £100,000, Scarrott, 32, was previously ordered to repay £12,000, and has since done so. The money will go to the banks who refunded the victims following the offences. Detective Inspector David Godfrey said: 'Rogue traders mercilessly prey on the elderly and vulnerable to defraud them of the savings they have earned over their lifetimes. We won't stop working to bring such people to justice and, as in this case, see them jailed for their crimes. Just as important though is that criminals are prevented from profiting from such offences and I am pleased our financial investigators have managed to recoup a large chunk of money in this case.'

## Livestock worrying offences – eight recent reports

One dog owner was arrested and his dog seized in the latest investigation of livestock worrying by the Rural Task Force.

In November eight livestock worrying offences were reported. The arrest related to a repeat offender.

Kent Police has a response plan to these incidents to ensure evidence is captured which can lead to court proceedings, compensation being paid to the sheep or other livestock owners and sanctions placed on irresponsible owners.

Dog owners are urged to be aware of the danger to livestock their pet can pose if not kept under proper control, leading to upsetting incidents resulting in death of animals, serious injuries, financial loss to farmers and potential loss of their own pets, as farmers can shoot dogs caught worrying livestock and police can seize animals responsible. DNA testing helps officers investigate attacks. Recently kits were given out during officers' visits to Ashford livestock market and other similar events.



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Use the QR code to find out more.

Or visit the website:

**MyCommunityVoiceKent.co.uk**





# Partnerships

## Key partners working with Kent Police to keep rural communities safe

### Business Crime Advisory Group

The Business Crime Advisory Group assists Kent Police in reducing business crime. Members are encouraged to share relevant information and help co-ordinate and deliver crime and anti-social behaviour prevention initiatives.

Chairman John M Taylor phone: **07974 100901**

### Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott

The Kent PCC holds a Rural Crime Board attended by the Kent Police Rural Task Force. The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner is a member of the National Rural Crime Network along with the 45 PCCs nationwide.

Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner web: **kent-pcc.gov.uk**

### Kent Association of Local Councils

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

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

### Country Land & Business Association

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

web: **www.cla.org.uk** email: **southeast@cla.org.uk** phone: **01264 358195**

### Kent Fire and Rescue Service

KFRS is responsible for delivering fire and rescue services to more than 1.7 million people. Each year fire officers deal with around 16,500 incidents including road crashes, house and barn fires and more than 2,400 non-fire rescues. KFRS works with the Kent Police, NFU, and CRAG to provide safety and risk reduction advice to support the agricultural business community.

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

### Historic England

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

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

### National Farmers Union

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

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



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for you to  
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confirmation  
and reference  
number  
immediately



Access **Live Chat**  
by the blue circle in  
the bottom right corner  
of any Kent Police webpage

## Countryside Code

### Remember

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

