



# RURAL TIMES

PROTECTING  
OUR RURAL  
COMMUNITIES

HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT

ISSUE 26 • SPRING 2026



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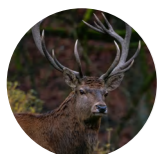


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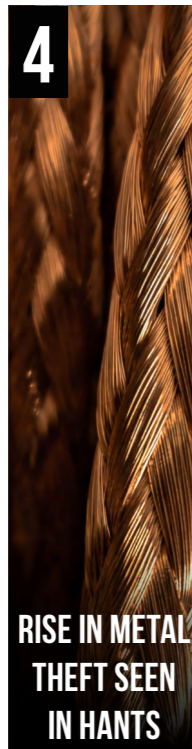


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## WEBSITE

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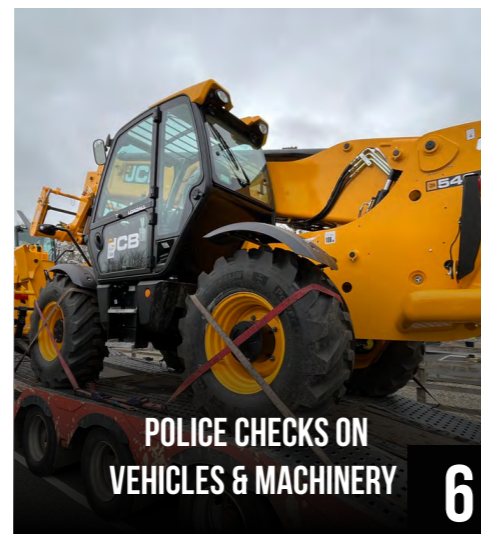
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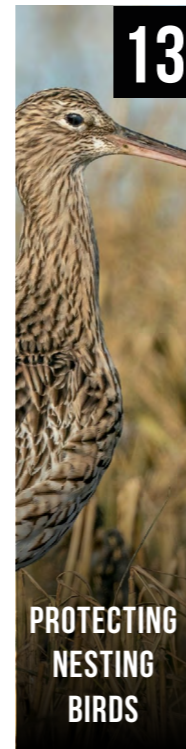
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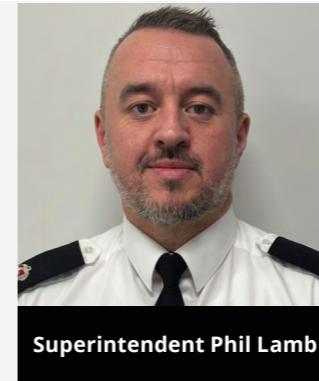
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**Superintendent Phil Lamb**

Hello, I am Superintendent Phil Lamb and I lead the Force's Strategic Area Policing Hub which encompasses our strategic response to rural crime.

It is one year since the introduction of our Country Watch Rural Crime Taskforce. I'm pleased to see how they've worked collaboratively with key partner agencies and members of our rural communities to bring a collective fight to criminals blighting our countryside. I understand the impact that crime has on rural communities and how important the work of the taskforce is in providing a highly visible and proactive policing presence.

They have been out day and night patrolling the vast rural spaces across Hampshire, and these patrols continue to support officers

## WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF RURAL TIMES

within neighbourhood policing, including dedicated Local Bobbies. This is in addition to making arrests and seizing property relevant to police investigations – whether that be equipment that is suspected to have been stolen, or vehicles suspected to have been used in crime. The monetary value of what they've seized has already exceeded half a million pounds, and much of the stolen property has been returned to the rightful owners.

As a Force we track crime trends to understand what is impacting our communities the most, where and when issues are happening, and who is responsible.

In the approach to summer we have seen increased fish poaching offences, particularly in the Winchester and Test Valley areas. Hampshire is home to some of the world's finest chalk stream rivers which are a draw for legitimate anglers and other visitors, and their experiences can be ruined by criminals who not only fish illegally

but engage in anti-social behaviour, and who can become aggressive and violent when challenged. Our Task Force routinely patrol the river networks throughout spring and summer to deal with any offences, and you can read about a recent court appearance for a fish poacher on page 14 of this magazine.

Hare coursing has decreased compared to previous years, but we would also expect to see decreases this time of year with the change of the season. We have also seen decreases in reports of theft of farming and plant machinery, but we must not be complacent as we know this is still a huge issue affecting farmers locally and nationally. You can read more in this edition about recent efforts by the Task Force to proactively check plant and farm machinery being transported through Hampshire.

Any information you have about these crime types, please keep telling us and we will continue to act.

## NEW APP AND TASK FORCE SUCCESS AN UPDATE FROM PCC DONNA JONES



**Donna Jones**  
Police and Crime Commissioner

I have been delighted to see the EyesOn app, which I fund, go live in recent weeks.

There are already more than 300 members of our Hampshire rural community on the app, and I would encourage anyone with a business in the countryside to apply at [www.eyesonapp.com](http://www.eyesonapp.com) for free membership (subject to approval).

We've had more than 40 crime reports submitted, with evidence including CCTV and intelligence, and approved users are also benefiting from news alerts and updates from the Rural Crime Task Force

Since I launched the Task Force last year, they have recovered £574,000 worth of goods, including plant and machinery as they disrupt the trade in moving stolen farm equipment, and across our two counties we also now have a dozen new Local Bobbies deployed into rural areas.

I'm looking forward to the rural shows across our region this summer and the opportunity for me and my team to meet with people from our countryside communities, to hear their concerns, and to talk about the actions we are taking.

OPCC staff will be at the Isle of Wight County Show, New Forest Show, Alresford Show and the Romsey Show - so please do come along to say hi and find out more.

We hope to see you there!



# THE PRICE IS RIGHT FOR SOME.... METAL THEFT REPORTS INCREASE AS CRIMINALS CASH IN ON RISING COSTS

**In the period December 2025 – February 2026, metal theft had increased by 114% when compared to the same period the previous year.**

We know the price of certain metals is going up, which then creates a market for criminals.

In response to this, we are working with regional and national colleagues around the issues to identify organised criminality. We are also routinely reviewing metal theft reports to ensure all lines of enquiry are progressed, to ascertain patterns of offending, and patrols are being conducted in rural isolated areas where repeat offending occurs.

On **page 14** of this magazine you can read about recent copper cable theft arrests made by the Constabulary.

### Advice and Prevention

#### Catalytic Converters

We have a dedicated page on our website regarding [catalytic converter theft](#), and encourage anyone whose vehicle has one to read this.

#### Battery Thefts

Opportunistic thieves are known to target rural batteries used for electric fencing, vehicles, farming, camping and solar panels.

Deter criminals by etching your postcode onto any high value batteries before painting them pink – this will make them unmissable,

and marking them in this way deters thieves from stealing them as there's a better chance of detection.

Read more in our [leaflet](#).

#### Empty homes undergoing renovation

If you currently have an empty property or have one undergoing renovations, consider where fittings that have been removed, or are waiting to be fitted, are left. Ensure they are not obvious to passersby or to anyone calling at the address.



#### Infrastructure Crime

Industrial sites can be a target for thieves looking to steal cabling or other metals.

Some of the signs of suspicious activity to look out for include:

- Unmarked vehicles at or near access points, construction or building sites. Most organisations have marked vehicles with visible

company details, although some smaller companies or individual workers may not.

- Unfamiliar individuals loitering around access points, depot entrances or locations where at-risk items are located.

- Consider suspicious behaviour by employees/ contractors.

- Check perimeter fencing for indicators of criminal reconnaissance such as markers tied to fencing. Check boundaries to look for gaps or damage which may be a sign of illegal access.

- Work taking place on construction or building sites outside of normal working hours. The local planning authority will know the hours attached to any planning consent within their area.

- Unlocked access gates into a building, construction or storage facility without any clear work taking place should always be investigated.

- Some criminals may use graffiti style symbols to mark areas where there is cable, metal or other at-risk items suitable for stealing.

**Ensure CCTV systems are working and aren't obscured, and report any suspicious activity to police.**

# CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE

### Keep livestock and your dog safe this spring

During lambing season, sheep and their young are particularly vulnerable to livestock worrying.

Livestock worrying is when a dog attacks or chases livestock on agricultural land or is at large in a field with livestock, which can result in significant injury or suffering and in the worst cases, death of the animals involved. This also has devastating consequences for farmers, causing personal distress as well as significant financial costs.

Some key points to bear in mind this time of year to help with the welfare of livestock and your dog:

- If you come across a sheep on its back, try to roll it over and raise the alarm with the farmer if this is possible.
- It is so important to keep dogs either on leads or under close control around livestock.
- If you are walking your dog in a field and there is no livestock, please keep the dog in sight at all times, be aware of what it is doing, and be confident it will return to you promptly on command. If you cannot be confident of this, the dog should not be off the lead.
- Ensure the dog does not stray off the path or area where you have right of access.
- It is a criminal offence for a dog to actively worry livestock. We want owners to be aware that in such instances, the owner or person in control of the dog can be prosecuted, and as a last resort the dog can be shot by the farmer to end an attack.

### Heating oil and fuel theft



In light of rising oil costs in the UK, we are offering security advice around fuel and heating oil to protect yourself from theft.

Many people rely on heating oil to keep their homes warm. Criminals will watch the market and take the opportunity to profit from these kinds of cost increases.

#### Advice for domestic oil

- Fuel tanks should be visible from the house to increase the chance of a thief being seen
- Use motion-sensor security lighting and consider installing a motion-sensor alarm in this area
- Use locking fuel caps and fit anti-siphoning devices
- Focus CCTV cameras on the tank
- Install cages or plant prickly plants around the tanks. It is important to screen your tank so that it cannot be seen from the road
- Install a fuel tank alarm – either one that triggers when the cap is tampered with or one that alerts the owner when the fuel level suddenly drops. More advanced systems can be linked to security lighting or send a text message to alert the owner
- The police can only recommend products that

have been attack tested and come with the Secured by Design Police Preferred Specification accreditation. The following two websites have a range of these suitable security products: [Secured by Design](#) and [Sold Secure - Security Product Testing & Approval](#)

- For further information and advice please see the following guide written by [Secured by Design: Fuel.pdf](#)

#### Diesel Theft

Diesel theft is a problem for many farms and rural properties. Fuel tanks stored in rural and isolated locations are very attractive to thieves looking for an easy target.

- keep tanks stored close to the property where you can see them. If this isn't possible, you should consider installing CCTV to watch over isolated tanks and restrict access with walls, fences and hedges. Security lighting such as 'dusk till dawn' or motion detection lighting can also be an effective deterrent to thieves
- remember to check the oil level in your tank regularly. Look for any spilt fuel, marks on the locks or anything else suspicious
- avoid installing a storage tank in an isolated area or outlying building
- consider using a mobile bowser (tanker) kept in a secure place when not in use
- use 'diesel dye', making your diesel traceable and less attractive to thieves



## FARM MACHINERY AND WASTE CARRIERS CHECKED BY POLICE TO IDENTIFY STOLEN GOODS AND WASTE CRIME

**Police teams from across the county continue to combine their efforts to target rural criminals using the Hampshire road networks, as well as visiting ports to check machinery being transported.**

Rural criminality such as the theft and onward sale of plant and agricultural machinery is organised. Offenders will often travel the length and breadth of the country to steal, and we know machinery is often transported overseas to be sold.



*Police checks at a Hampshire port*

On Thursday 12 March, the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force led a proactive operation at the DVSA site off the M3 in Chilcomb, with support from roads policing, the Lyndhurst Neighbourhood Enforcement Team, the Commercial Vehicle Unit, and our partners in Data Tag and the DVSA.

Checks were conducted on vehicles towing heavy loads, with a particular focus on vehicles carrying plant and agricultural vehicles and machinery.

In the last year, the Task Force has recovered hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of stolen goods and vehicles, much of which has been returned to its rightful owner.

During this particular operation, no stolen goods were identified, however two people were arrested at the site in Chilcomb – a man was arrested on suspicion of drug driving, and another was arrested for an outstanding warrant.

A number of drivers carrying loads were also fined for their vehicles being overweight.

Sergeant Kevin Pearson, from the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force said: “As part of this operation, police have been specifically targeting lightweight commercial vehicles – anything

that is towing something, or is articulated, and anything which is loaded. We’re checking their loads and the conditions, and we’re checking the plant machinery that is on them.

“A representative from Data Tag has been working with us who is checking the machinery against the national databases for stolen plant, so we’re making sure that we achieve our due diligence with regards to anything passing through here or anything suspicious.

“The issue isn’t one that’s just restricted to Hampshire, it’s a national issue. Farm machinery and plant theft is a particular problem for our rural communities – our farms are continually targeted by criminality and a lot of this equipment is difficult to trace, but easy for criminals to transport.”

Farm machinery thieves are not the only rural criminals who use our road networks however.

Police and partners have also been conducting proactive operations to target waste criminals and anyone who could be involved in fly-tipping.

Operation Wolf was stood up in recent years to combat this, and is routinely carried out in the county.

In February and March, neighbourhood officers (NPT) in the New Forest joined forces with the Rural Task Force as well as Forestry England, New Forest District Council and the DVSA for Op Wolf activity in Crockford Clump, Beaulieu and Lyndhurst.



A large number of vehicles, trailers, and plant machinery were checked during these operations, and a number of vans carrying waste were unable to provide evidence of a waste carriers license when requested. They were ordered to provide evidence of this within 14 days, or risk facing a fine.



On 19 March, Hart NPT led another Op Wolf in the north of Hampshire, with support from the Task Force, roads policing, Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams, Commercial Vehicle Unit, Environment Agency, Motor Insurance Bureau, DVSA, National Highways, DataTag and local council enforcement officers.

Teams set up a rendezvous point at the Mere oak Park and Ride on the A33, due to its location close to county borders.

During the operation, approximately 40 vehicles were

stopped, ranging from a small tipper truck to the large grabber lorries. Sixteen were found to have all the correct documentation for waste carrying, their vehicles were road worthy and they were very grateful for this operation.

Of the other vehicles stopped, we identified a number of issues. One driver was found to be driving under the influence of drugs and was subsequently arrested. At least 10 vehicles were found to have tyres that were in a dangerous condition which meant that they were not allowed to leave until they had been changed or replaced. Numerous Ford Tippers were found to be seriously overweight and were required to remove some of their load.

At least three vehicles had no insurance. Other vehicles had defects that meant they were not able to drive until they were rectified. Some vehicles received warning notices regarding waste carrying (this included someone who had come to replace the tyres of the other vehicles) whilst some of the waste carriers were issued with Fixed Penalty Notices.



## PRICELESS NAPOLEONIC PLAQUES STOLEN IN BURGLARY 12 YEARS AGO ARE RECOVERED BY RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE

In February 2014 the Crypt of Napoleon Bonaparte III, last Emperor of France, was burgled and three unique, historically important and priceless bronze altar cards were taken.



*The altar cards, pictured in situ before the burglary*

After 12 years they were thought to have been lost, until a chance call to the Constabulary on 10 February this year from an antiques dealer in Derbyshire – Paul Gostelow – who said he had two of the stolen items in his possession.

Remarkably, Paul knew them to be from the Napoleonic era due to the crown in the corner of the frame – which he recognised from an episode of the 90s Brit TV series *Lovejoy!*



*One of the altar cards, with its distinctive crown atop the letter 'N' in each corner of the frame*

The call to police was intercepted by PC Mark Webb from the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, who is our heritage crime specialist.

Some investigation with the International Stolen Arts Register confirmed that they were indeed the items.

Officers from the Taskforce subsequently travelled to Derbyshire to recover the items, and PC Webb was able to return them to St Michaels Abbey in Farnborough for restoration and return to their place in the Crypt.



*PC Webb pictured with antiques dealer Paul Gostelow*

Ongoing work has identified a number of lines of enquiry and efforts will be made to locate the third plaque which remains missing.

## MAN CONVICTED OF WILDLIFE OFFENCES BUT CLEARED OF CAUSING DAMAGE TO BROUGHTON VILLAGE SHOP

**\*This article contains distressing images.**

A man has been convicted of wildlife offences after the bodies of dead birds and animals were dumped outside of a Hampshire village shop.

On 15 March 2024, police received multiple reports that a large pile of approximately 50 dead hares had been strewn across the floor outside Broughton Community Shop.

The carcasses of a barn owl and a kestrel were also stuffed on to the shop's door handle.

Local villagers turned up to help clean up the mess prior to police arriving.

39-year-old James 'Jimmy' Kempster was identified by police for his involvement. Magistrates determined that, whilst the evidence was insufficient to place Kempster at the scene, they accepted he had handled the dead birds.

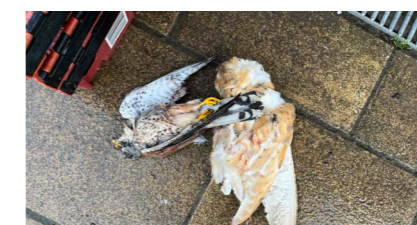
CCTV showed a Suzuki Grand Vitara turn up at the shop in the early hours of that morning. Two

men exited the vehicle and began throwing the animal carcasses on the floor in act described as a 'horror movie scene' in court.

The following day, officers were out on patrol in rural Test Valley when they discovered a car similar to that captured on the CCTV burnt out approximately three and a half miles from Broughton.

Police conducted a number of further enquiries, including testing of the dead birds which showed Kempster's DNA was present on their carcasses.

He was charged with possession of a dead schedule 1 wild bird, and possession of a dead non-schedule 1 wild bird under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.



**Barn owl and kestrel at the scene**

A second man, aged 29 years, was interviewed under caution by police as part of this investigation, but he was later released with no

further action being taken.

Kempster, of Marchwood Road in Eling, denied the offences and the case went to trial at Southampton Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 21 April 2026.

He was convicted of both wildlife offences, and cleared of a charge of criminal damage. He was bailed by Magistrates to appear at the same court for sentencing on 23 June.

Test Valley Rural Inspector Stu Ross said: "This was a shocking incident which caused distress to a small village community in the heart of rural Hampshire.

"The dumping of animal carcasses is something we see across the county and can be used as an intimidation tactic by criminals operating in remote rural areas to taunt local people and create additional misery.

"The sheer number of animals that were killed and deposited outside the Broughton shop on this occasion was appalling, and we simply will not tolerate our communities being terrorised in this manner."



## A FUNDING BOOST, NEW KIT, AND AN AWARDS WIN SETS 2026 OFF TO A POSITIVE START FOR OUR MOUNTED RURAL PATROL VOLUNTEERS

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary's Mounted Rural Patrol (MRP) Volunteers have received a significant kit boost this year.

This follows additional funding and equipment provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the British Horse Society (BHS).

The investment has enabled the Constabulary to supply 22 current volunteers with enhanced high visibility horse veils and breast plates, improving the visibility and safety of riders and their horses while on patrol.

Sufficient additional kit has also been secured to equip new volunteers expected to join in the coming year.

The Mounted Rural Patrol Volunteer Scheme allows fully vetted riders from local communities to assist the Constabulary in tackling and reducing rural crime.

Acting as the "eyes and ears" of the countryside, volunteers help strengthen situational awareness and reporting across rural areas.

The scheme supports and promotes:

- Gathering and passing on intelligence
- Security and crime prevention awareness

- Reporting suspicious and criminal activity
- Effective communication with rural communities
- Identification of anti-social behaviour and animal related offences

Rural crime affects everyone – from wildlife harmed by illegal hunting practices, to the environment damaged by fly tipping and hazardous waste, to farms targeted for high value equipment, diesel, and livestock theft.

The impact reaches far beyond those who live or work in the countryside.

MRP volunteers play an invaluable role in helping to deter such offences by increasing visibility, offering reassurance, and actively reporting incidents while out riding in rural spaces across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Their efforts were formally recognised recently at the annual Police and Crime Commissioner's Awards Ceremony.

The team were delighted to have received the Police Volunteer of the Year Award at the ceremony, which took place at Hilton Southampton Utilita Bowl in West End on Friday 13 March 2026.

PCC Donna Jones said: "I am always proud and humbled to hear how so many people are making such a difference in their communities.

"These individuals are the ones who show up and go the extra mile, often without expecting any recognition at all. Day in, day out and often in really tough situations, they protect the vulnerable and stand up for what is right.

"But we must not forget the teams around them. I'm sure many of our winners would agree that they couldn't do their vital work without the support of their colleagues.

"Thank you to every winner and nominee. What you do matters. It's appreciated not just by me but by your colleagues, leaders, and most importantly, the people you serve."

Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force Co-ordinator Hazel Cross, who runs the scheme, is pictured below alongside some of the volunteers and PCC Donna Jones at the event.



## ENHANCED CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY TO COMBAT WASTE CRIME ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Waste criminals will be detected and stopped before they even get started, thanks to a new package of surveillance and investigative measures announced by the Environment Agency.

As part of a major crackdown on waste crime, an enhanced 33-strong drone squad will now track down illegal dumps from the air. The drones, some of which are being upgraded to carry laser mapping technology, will capture evidence to help secure successful prosecutions.

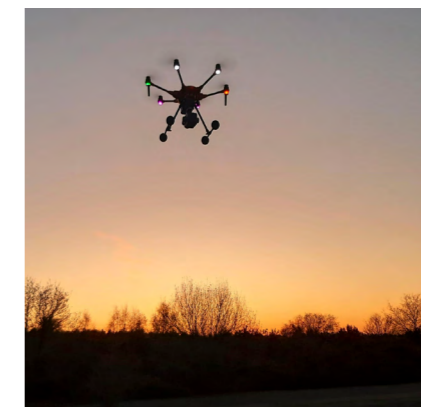
The Environment Agency has also developed a new screening tool that enables EA officers to scan and cross-check lorry licence applications against waste permit records – with suspect operators flagged before they have a chance to move waste illegally.

The new capabilities are backed by a reinforced Joint Unit for Waste Crime – now a 20-strong group of specialists working closely with law enforcement partners to dismantle organised criminal networks. This builds on a record year for waste enforcement, with 751 illegal waste sites shut down.

Phil Davies, Head of the Joint Unit for Waste Crime said: "Illegal waste dumping is appalling, and we are determined to turn the tide on this heinous crime.

"With organised criminals becoming ever more sophisticated, we are adopting new technologies to find and, importantly, stop them.

"Through the greater use of drones, stronger partnerships and more officers on the ground, we will build on our action so far and send a clear message to those committing waste crimes - we will stop you."



### Greater drone surveillance and Lidar mapping

The Environment Agency has stepped up its use of drone surveillance, with a total of 33 trained pilots putting a greater focus on waste crime. Since July last year, the EA's drones were in the air for 272 hours.

Drones will soon be equipped with Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) technology, which fires millions of laser points per second towards

the ground below to create highly detailed maps of illegal waste sites.

Currently flown from a dedicated aircraft mainly to capture flood information, moving Lidar onto drones will allow even more precise mapping, pinpointing exactly where waste has been dumped. These maps can be used as evidence in court to and help bring waste criminals to justice.

### New screening scans Office of the Traffic Commissioner data

Each week, the Office of the Traffic Commissioner publishes reports, listing all new applications for Heavy Goods Vehicle operator licences.

New software checks those applications against the EA's public register, identifying which operators hold waste permits and waste carrier licences. This enables EA officers to identify and target potential offenders before they begin operating.

The new tool has already been trialled successfully in East Anglia, where it helped the agency uncover a waste company that had secretly relocated its HGV operations to evade enforcement. The software flagged the new operating centre within a week, allowing EA officers to intervene before a licence was approved.



## BATS TO BENEFIT FROM NEW FOREST NATURE RECOVERY PROJECT

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

A New Forest nature recovery project is shedding new light on local bat populations and improving habitat for these elusive nocturnal hunters.

The New Forest is a national stronghold for bats, and of the 18 species found in the UK, 14 can be found here.

In 2025, baseline surveys were undertaken to measure bat activity before habitat improvements were carried out through the Species Survival Fund (SSF) project.

The £1.3million scheme, led by the New Forest National Park Authority and involving five partner organisations, has seen local experts create and restore habitats at around 30 sites to increase climate resilience and reverse species decline.

Wild New Forest – one of the five partners in the project – placed bat detectors at 11 SSF sites for around a fortnight each, to record bat echo-location calls from dusk until dawn. More than 140,000 individual bat passes were detected during the surveys.

Detailed analysis indicated all 14 of the New Forest bat species were potentially recorded; although not all could be

confirmed with high confidence using acoustic data alone.

Common and Soprano Pipistrelle were the most frequently detected species, accounting for 94 per cent of all bat passes.



The nationally scarce and red-listed Barbastelle was recorded at all the sites surveyed, with nearly 40 passes per night at one parkland location.

The locally rare Greater Horseshoe Bat was also recorded at two sites in the north of the New Forest.

Bats thrive in landscapes that offer an abundance of insects and other invertebrate prey. The SSF project has improved and increased bat habitat by creating insect-rich wetlands and wildflower meadows, restoring native woodland, and planting new hedgerows to strengthen connections between habitats.

Wild New Forest will be monitoring future changes in bat activity at SSF sites where habitat improvements have recently taken place, hopefully demonstrating the long-term value of the project for bats and the wider New Forest ecosystem.

Prof Russell Wynn, Director of Wild New Forest, said: "These new data have revealed existing bat hotspots and highlight the exceptional bat diversity in the New Forest. In addition to supporting the SSF project, the data is being shared with trusted colleagues in Hampshire and Wiltshire Bat Groups to inform wider survey and research work."

The other partners involved in the SSF project are Freshwater Habitats Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and New Forest Commoners Defence Association, with support from the RSPB and New Forest Biodiversity Forum.

The project's wider aim has been to restore and expand habitats from the inner core of the New Forest to its outer edges and beyond, while also demonstrating the benefits of a multi-partner and multi-intervention approach by local experts.

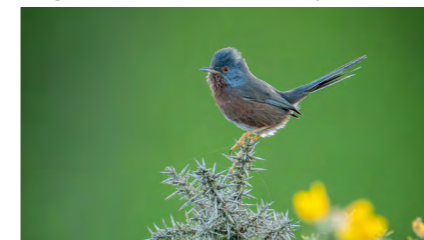
## STAY ON TRACK TO SUPPORT NEW FOREST WILDLIFE

### INCLUDING GROUND NESTING BIRDS IN 2026

The public are being asked to support rare ground nesting birds in the New Forest by staying on the main Forest tracks and keeping dogs with them there.

Recent surveys show the numbers of wading birds such as the iconic curlew are at critically low levels, with this species affected by changing weather patterns, disturbance and predation. Nightjars which travel from Africa have also seen their numbers in the Forest decline by around 18%.

Conversely, Dartford warblers have done well with the highest ever numbers recorded in the Forest and nearby locations in 2023. Woodlarks were also found in record numbers in the New Forest. The rise is in part believed due to the return of large areas of heathland by Forestry England over the last 15 years.



Dartford Warbler

Unlike most birds, ground nesting birds build nests and raise their young on the ground around woodland edges and on the open

heathland areas of the Forest. This makes it especially important to avoid startling parents causing them to leave their nests and leave eggs and chicks exposed to predators.

Special quiet zones will once again be set up at the most sensitive breeding locations in the New Forest. In these areas, a small number of nearby Forestry England car parks will be closed and signs in place across the Forest to highlight the presence of the birds and help avoid disturbance to them as they attempt to breed and raise chicks.

Leanne Sargeant, Senior Ecologist for Forestry England, said: "The New Forest is one of the most important locations in the UK for birds. This includes many species of ground-nesting birds who have long since all but disappeared from other locations. By taking a few simple actions we can all help the chances of them breeding successfully in the Forest. Please stay on the main, gravel tracks and follow signs to avoid the most sensitive areas to give these birds the space they need."

Car parks closed during the breeding season include: Clayhill, Crockford, Crockford Clump, Hincheslea, Hincheslea Moor, Ocknell Pond, Ogdens, Shatterford and Yew Tree Heath. Beaulieu Heath

car park is also partially closed.

Special orange signs indicate areas very close to breeding grounds and can be seen in locations including car parks and on the main tracks. Red "stop" signs highlight nesting sites in the immediate vicinity and ask the public to avoid these areas.

People are asked to stick to the main gravel tracks and not to venture onto open heathland areas where birds will be nesting. Those with dogs are asked to keep dogs with them on the tracks and where necessary use leads.

David Bennett, Co-Chair of New Forest Dog Owners Group, said: "Dog walkers are one of the groups who can really make a difference to the success of ground nesting birds. It's not about dogs necessarily disrupting nests directly, but their walking activity can alarm nesting birds. They fly up, and this shows other predators such as foxes and crows where the nests are. As a minimum, we'd ask walkers to stick to the signs. In orange areas, this means having close control and sticking to the paths, which may mean using a lead. And totally avoiding red signed areas. It may be preferable simply to find another walk for the nesting season, and Forestry England have an excellent [robust tracks map](#) on their website."

# RURAL ROUND-UP

## SUSPECTED CABLE THIEVES ARRESTED IN ANDOVER AS POLICE SEIZE VEHICLE AND QUANTITY OF COPPER

Two men have been arrested in connection with a copper cable burglary in Andover.

In February officers were patrolling around Woodpecker Way, Andover, when they spotted a hole in the fence of one of the businesses.

Upon entering the site to check no one was inside, they saw people in dark clothing running up towards the train tracks.

After an area search, with assistance from Wiltshire Police and British Transport

Police, two men were subsequently located nearby.

A 31-year-old man and a 38-year-old man, both from Bristol, were arrested on suspicion of burglary.

They have been released on police bail until 11 August as our investigation into this burglary continues.

A vehicle and a quantity of cut copper cables have been seized by police as part of this investigation.

## PATROLS ALONG THE COUNTY'S RIVERS AS WARMER WEATHER COINCIDES WITH OP TRAVERSE OFFENCES

As the weather warms, we often see rising instances of illegal fishing – rod licence offences, or theft of fishing rights known more commonly as fish poaching.

Op Traverse is set up to deal with this type of offending, and police and partners routinely conduct Traverse patrols around the Rivers Itchen, Hamble and Test, and other waterways in Hampshire.

Traverse related offences are not always an isolated issue, however. Some, but not all, of the people involved in this type of offending can be involved in other wider rural criminality.

Riverkeepers have in the past been subjected to violence, harassment, abuse and threats by those who commit this type of offending, which is why it is so important that we maintain a visible presence along the rivers to put a stop to this.

On Saturday 14 March, the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force joined the Environment Agency on a patrol along the Itchen.



No offences were identified, and the team had some positive engagement with members of the public along the way.

The following week these patrols continued in the Shawford area and out towards Compton Lock.

During this visit, officers stopped and engaged with one man who was fishing without a licence and during the off season. This will be investigated further, alongside all other police investigations which continue in the background.

No fishing is to take place when the river is in its off-season. This will be clearly signed up and down the river for the public to observe.

Once this restriction is taken off, in order to fish along this protected river you must pay for the licence. This can be completed by using the many signposted QR codes located along the river.

Other patrols took place along the Itchen and Test that same weekend. Whilst on the Test, officers stopped a group who were reported to have been illegally fishing along two sections of the river. None had rod licenses – they were all dealt with by means of Community Resolution and their details were passed to the Environment Agency.

## ITCHEN FISH POACHER FINED BY THE COURTS

In August 2025, on a stretch of the River Itchen in The Worthy's, a river keeper reported a fish poaching incident involving a group of trespassers.

Police attended and two men were arrested. One of them, 19-year-old Jimmy Doran, of Queens Road in Liphook, was charged with unlawfully taking a fish.

He was found guilty of the offence on 8 May this year at Basingstoke Magistrates Court.

Doran was subsequently fined £500, and ordered to pay court costs of £85 and a Victim Surcharge of £200.

## NEW GUIDELINES FOR PUNISHING COURSERS

The Sentencing Council has published [new guidelines](#) for courts dealing with hare coursing offences, which will come into effect on 1 June 2026.

The guidelines, which have been published following a 12-week public consultation, are designed to ensure courts fully recognise the harm these offences cause when determining their seriousness. This includes encouraging prison sentences for offenders that demonstrate the highest level of culpability and harm.

His Honour Judge Simon Drew KC, of the Sentencing Council, said: "Illegal activities associated with hare coursing cause real harm — to wildlife, to property, to farmers and their families and to the wider rural communities that often deal with the repercussions of this aggressive crime. The strength of feeling we heard through our consultation made clear just how seriously this issue is felt. This guideline ensures the courts have the tools to reflect that harm in sentencing."

# RURAL ROUND-UP

## DOWNLOAD EYESON - THE BESPOKE RURAL CRIME APP



We're encouraging people with a business connection to rural Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to sign up to the free EyesOn app.

EyesOn is the first rural application of its kind, offering a digital solution to filing crime reports as well as a secure 'chat' function between groups of local users and police.

Information is sent to officers in a police compliant format, and the app's AI data analytics help support rural policing priorities and utilising "what three words", rather than postcode locations, for precise rural mapping.

The app replaces our previous DISC system which had been used historically to share information and news alerts between police and people with a business interest in rural and wildlife matters such as farmers, gamekeepers and rural estate owners.

It can be downloaded through the app store on your phone, and there is a private rural community within the app that approved users can join, such as rural businesses, workers and partner agencies. App store links can be found here: <https://eyesonapp.com/download/>

Users are being urged to continue using 999 to report crimes in progress or in an emergency. However, the improved line of communication from EyesOn between rural communities and police will ensure that officers can better understand local issues and the impact that Organised Crime has on these areas.

Inspector Cath MacDonald, who leads the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, said: "EyesOn gives police and the community a much more user-friendly interface, making it quicker and easier to report crimes and incidents, and then to get that information to the right local policing team."

## TWO MEN CHARGED WITH SUSPECTED VEHICLE AND PLANT THEFTS

Two men have been charged after warrants were executed in Southampton and Test Valley by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary's Serious Organised Crime Unit in March.

Teams executed a warrant and searches at a site on Romsey Road, East Wellow, as part of an investigation into multiple vehicle and plant thefts in the county.

Warrants were also executed at addresses in Totton and Southampton.

Multiple stolen vehicles, including high-end cars, motorbikes, a panel-sided van, and a caravan, were seized.

We also seized stolen plant machinery, trailers, a quantity of counterfeit cash, and suspected cannabis.

The following two men were charged with conspiracy to steal, as a result of police enquiries:

-Ricky Severn, aged 39, and of Croydon Close in Southampton

-Simon Leon Marszall, aged 41, and of Harwood Close in Totton.

The charges relate to the following incidents which took place across Hampshire, and also an offence which took place over the border in West Sussex:

- The attempted theft of a vehicle from a VW dealership in Chichester on 30 May 2025

- The theft of a Mercedes from a dealership near Southampton Airport on 31 May 2025

- A commercial burglary at an electrical substation in New Milton on 16 July 2025

- The attempted theft of a vehicle from a Toyota Dealership in Waterloo on 5 August 2025

The investigation into the other stolen items which were seized by police is ongoing.

Severn and Marszall were remanded in custody to appear before Basingstoke Magistrates Court on 11 March.

At the hearing, they were both released on conditional bail by Magistrates.

The pair appeared at Southampton Crown Court for a plea hearing on Thursday 4 June.

A trial date has also now been set for the case.

This has been listed at the same court for Monday 1 February 2027.

## WANT TO STAY INFORMED? REGISTER FOR HAMPSHIRE ALERTS

As a local resident, you can play a key role in helping us to prevent and detect crime in rural areas.

By signing up to Hampshire Alerts, you will receive timely updates covering crime prevention advice, crime alerts and witness appeals for incidents.

[Click here to sign up to receive regular Hampshire Alerts](#)

It is your way of being kept informed of what we're doing in the community, allowing us to keep the communities of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight safe.

You can also tell us what issues matter most to you by completing our 'Let's Talk' survey here: <https://survey.hampshirealert.co.uk/>

# COUNTRY WATCH RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE



Receive FREE crime and community  
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