



Be safe,
feel safe.

Some practical
advice to help
keep you and
your community
safe







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Rural crime has an impact that is more than just financial. It can make people feel isolated and unsafe, affecting the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

As commissioner I want you to be safe and feel safe. We are fortunate that our communities across Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin are comparatively low crime areas, but perception of crime is important. In many cases the fear of crime is not reflective of the reality of crime in that community. I want to ensure your voices are heard, you can have confidence in the police and that you and they are connected on the issues that matter the most.

My Rural Focus Campaign and my Rural Crime Strategy, builds on the work I've done already; the investments I've made increasing officer numbers including specialist Rural and Business Officers and Wildlife Officers as well as my work to support rural crime initiatives and the feedback I've had from you.

I will continue to meet with you to address your concerns, so we can make our communities safer. I will hold the force to account

to ensure the police play their part prioritising rural issues and protecting the most vulnerable and hard to reach people, and I will back them with the resources to offer you the best possible service.

Communities can also have an important role to play in keeping themselves safe, and this booklet contains lots of simple, practical advice. I'd also encourage you to take advantage of Rural Focus events, to raise any concerns, and to contact your Rural and Business Officers for tailored, specialist support.

Together we can make rural communities feel connected and safe.

Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion



The PCC has invested in SmartWater which, when used to mark property, can identify the item as stolen which will help with prosecuting the offender. To find out more, and to enquire about discounted SmartWater for your community, contact your local councillor.

How SmartWater works:

- Assigns your valuables with their own unique forensic code, allowing them to be traced back to you;
- Makes your home less of a target for thieves;
- Can be used on anything from electronic equipment to jewellery;
- Easy to apply, only visible under UV light - does not leave unattractive marks or stains;
- Proven to work - widely used by the police and feared by criminals;
- Gives added peace of mind;
- Supplied with signage to warn thieves that your home is protected;
- When deployed by police, SmartWater has helped reduce burglary by up to 85%;
- Helps to increase prosecutions by linking criminals back to the scene of their crime.



General Home Security

Doors and Windows

- Ensure all doors and windows are shut and locked when not in use
- Ensure windows and door frames are in good repair
- Fit good quality deadlocks conforming to the latest British Standards to all external doors
- Fit good quality window locks

Security Lighting

- Install security lights that come on automatically at dusk and go off at dawn
- Help make your property look occupied by fitting timer switches to lamps in different rooms and set them to come on at staggered times
- Due to the potential fire risk in using any electrical device, it is important that all manufacturer's instructions are strictly adhered to at all times

CCTV and Intruder Alarms

- Consider installing CCTV, with signage, to provide formal surveillance to the most vulnerable areas of the property
- Consider installing an audible and monitored intruder alarm system
- Get comprehensive advice from a reputable security company that conforms to national standards, such as:
 - >> National Security Inspectorate (NSI)
 - >> Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board (SSAIB)



Outbuilding Security

Doors and Windows

- Fit good quality locks that comply with relevant British Standards with good quality locking bars and robust padlocks
- Protect windows with metal bars or grilles, or consider blocking them up completely
- Ensure all windows are shut and locked when not in use

Security Lighting

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Boundary Security

Entrances and Exits

- Look closely at the perimeter of your land to ensure it is as secure as possible
- If possible remove all private access points that are no longer used and establish a single gated entrance and exit
- Consider installing an entry control system (infra-red, intercom or keypad entry)

Gates and Hinges

- Invert and cap gate hinges so that gates cannot be lifted off. Ensure fixing bolts cannot be removed
- Use good quality padlocks with covers so they cannot be easily cut off
- Use locking posts or temporary obstructions to control large openings to yards

Natural Boundary Protection

- Plant thorn hedges to use as natural boundaries

- Restrict vehicle access by digging deep ditches

Fire Risks

- Remove hay and straw from fields as soon as possible after harvesting
- Store hay and straw separately from other buildings
- Store petrol, diesel and other fuels in secure areas. Storage tank outlets should be padlocked
- Dispose of refuse safely and on a regular basis
- Seek further advice from your local fire officer



Illegal Activity

Fly Tipping

- Restrict the opportunity for fly tipping by improving boundary security through the use of fencing, bollards or gating
- Use signage to indicate that an area is monitored
- Quickly remove evidence of fly tipping so it does not act as a signal and attract further offences
- Report all incidents of fly tipping to your local authority as soon as possible
- If possible make note of any vehicle details and descriptions of people involved

Illegal Occupation

- Perimeter protection of vacant land and car parks reduces the risk, inconvenience and costs involved in removal of trespassers and illegal occupants
- Look closely at the perimeter of your land to ensure it is as secure as possible

- Restrict vehicle access by digging deep ditches
- Consider your personal safety before approaching any individuals
- The landowner can take proceedings to the County Court to obtain a court order for the eviction of illegal occupants

Illegal Off-Roading

- Improve boundary security through the use of fencing, bollards or gating, making the land less accessible to off-road vehicles
- Report incidents of illegal off-roading to the police. If possible, record vehicle details and descriptions of the people involved
- Consider using signage to reinforce the illegal aspect of this activity and to warn that trespassers will be prosecuted
- Consider your personal safety before approaching individuals

Machinery Security

Keys and Locks

- Ensure that vehicles, when not in use, are locked away or out of sight of a passing opportunist thief
- When vehicles or plant equipment are kept outside, they should be locked and the keys secured in your possession or in a locked key safe
- Consider the use of hitch locks, wheel clamps or ground anchors. You may require a combination of the above to meet insurance requirements

Security Markings

- All property including vehicles should be uniquely marked, photographed and recorded somewhere safe. This should include serial, chassis and model numbers
- Use property marking, such as SmartWater, to uniquely mark all types of property
- Include your post code and property name or number in a non-obvious place

- Popular options include stamping, etching, UV marking and DNA products

Tracker and Data Tagging

- Consider fitting a tracking device or a data tagging chip.(CESAR - Vehicle Security Scheme)
- Your insurance company can provide advice on suitable products

Diesel Theft

- Store diesel in a secure fuel tank within a bund and use good quality locks
- Avoid siting storage tanks in isolated areas such as outlying buildings
- Consider using a mobile bowser that could be removed to a secure place when not in use
- Consider the use of a 'diesel dye' that makes your diesel traceable and therefore less attractive to thieves
- Report incidents of suspicious activity to the police and if possible record vehicle details and descriptions of the people involved

Scrap Metal Theft

Metal theft impacts on all aspects of the community, from crimes affecting individuals and communities through to its effect on national and global businesses e.g. power and transport providers. However, when crime prevention measures are used, reductions in offences can be achieved.

Protect your Property

- Dispose of scrap metal regularly and legitimately to make your premises less vulnerable to metal thieves
- If you are approached by opportunistic 'scrap dealers' tell them you have a contract with a legitimate scrap dealer and ask them to leave
- Report incidents of suspicious activity to the police and if possible record vehicle details and descriptions of the people involved
- Remove any easy access onto building roofs, such as water butts, waste bins and tall trees located near to the building. This makes theft more difficult. Remember to get any necessary approval from your local authority for tree cutting before work starts
- Store ladders in a secure place. This is really important when building works that involve scaffolding are taking place
- Where possible, keep any gates locked and restrict vehicle access to the site
- Make it difficult for thieves to move stolen goods by removing wheelbarrows etc
- Maximise surveillance by cutting back tall trees and vegetation which could otherwise provide a screen for intruders to hide behind. Remember to get any necessary approval from your local authority for tree cutting before work starts
- If you have lead on any roofs check them regularly so that any theft of roofing materials is found before it rains and water enters the building, causing further damage
- Encourage members of your community to keep watch and to report any suspicious activity. Find out more about local Watch Schemes on page 18

- Apply anti-climb paint to drain pipes and roof guttering. This restricts access to roofing. Do not apply the paint below a height of two metres. Display warning notices which warn people that anti-climb paint is being used and display them prominently. Anti-climb paint can be bought from any security products company
- Protect the lower section of lightning conductor ribbons using a metal cage or sheath securely fixed to the building fabric
- Consider installing security lighting, particularly at roof level where metal roof coverings are present. Check with your local authority if permission is needed to do this



Tack Security

- Secure windows on the inside of tack rooms with solid iron bars (tubular steel can be bent)
- Secure all doors with a good quality lock. Use bolts not screws on the hinges
- Property mark tack and display signage to deter thieves
- Padlock gates with substantial padlocks and heavy duty chains
- Consider reversing the top hinge on yard gates to prevent them from being lifted off
- Fit security lights and an intruder alarm

Firearm Security

There are strict regulations with regard to safe storage and use of firearms. It is an offence not to comply with these conditions.

If you need advice about firearms security contact West Mercia Police Firearms Licensing Department.

Suspicious Activity

- All communities should remain vigilant and report suspicious behaviour to the police
- Report individuals asking specific questions about or taking pictures of a facility or a farm's processes
- Report any attempt to purchase fertilisers, diesel, herbicides or pesticides by those not authorised or suspicious individuals
- Record any manufacturer code numbers from the bags and detonation resistance test certificates as you may be required to present them
- The Health & Safety Executive can provide further advice on the storage and transportation of fertilisers, particularly ammonium nitrate

Chemical Storage

- Wherever possible store all fertiliser inside a dedicated locked building or compound
- Do not leave fertiliser where it is visible to the public
- Do not sell fertiliser unless the purchaser is known by you to be a genuine farmer or user
- Record fertiliser deliveries and usage and carry out regular stock takes. Report any discrepancy or loss to the police



Endangered Species and Conservation

- In the UK legislation gives protection to wildlife and important habitats and sites
- Crimes against protected species include killing or taking them from the wild, collecting their eggs or skins for personal collections, trading in them and taxidermy offences. People destroying nests and breeding sites, bat roosts and other protected habitats can also be committing offences
- Contact the police, Natural England or your local wildlife trust if you think an offence has been or is about to be committed

Cruelty and Persecution of Wildlife Species

- Some legislation protects particular species such as badgers and deer, by making it an offence to cause them unnecessary suffering by certain acts
- Most hunts comply with the law but if you become aware of hunts that pursue live animals you should report this to the police

- It is an offence for a person to hunt with a dog unless exempt. The exemptions are very closely defined
- The Hunting Act 2004 states that a person will be hunting a wild mammal with a dog if he engages alone or participates with others in the pursuit of a wild mammal, and a dog is employed in that pursuit, whether or not in their direct control

Hare Coursing

- The Hunting Act 2004 made hare coursing illegal. Hare coursing tends to start after harvest when large tracts of land are left without standing crops and usually occurs at dawn or dusk
- The most obvious sign is a group of vehicles parked in a rural area, perhaps by a gateway to farmland, on a grass verge, on a farm track or bridle path
- There will usually be estate cars, four wheel drives or vans. It will be obvious looking inside whether there is evidence of dogs or not

- Hare coursers often travel in convoy with vans at the front and rear containing minders
- If you see an event taking place we would advise you not to approach the participants but contact the police immediately

Poaching

Poaching (hunting or fishing) is illegal because:

- The game or fish is not in season;
- The poacher does not possess a licence;
- The hunter used an illegal weapon for that animal;
- The animal is on restricted land;
- The right to hunt this animal is claimed by somebody;
- The means used are illegal;
- The animal or fish is protected by law or has been listed as an endangered animal.

Reporting a Wildlife Crime

When reporting wildlife crime consider these points:

- Are the suspect/s alone or in a group?;
- Are they trespassing?;
- Do they have equipment with them?;
- Do they have dogs or firearms with them?;
- Where are they going?;
- Where have they been?;
- What do they look like?;
- Have they any vehicles? What are the number plates and vehicle models?;
- Can you safely get a photograph?;
- Call the police if you see something suspicious.

Horse Crime

- Take colour photos of your animal in the winter and again in the summer from both sides, head on and tail
- If there is a distinctive mark or scar, take a close up photo of these
- Photograph the “chestnuts”. You will then have a comprehensive record of your horse
- Get your horse freeze marked or have a microchip implanted
- Ensure you have a passport for your horse. This is a legal requirement
- If reporting a horse related incident, please use terminology that can be easily understood
- Join your local Horse Watch Scheme



Animal Mistreatment

- If you believe any animal (wild or domestic) is or has been mistreated in the first instance call the RSPCA or the police

Livestock Theft

- Report any suspicious activity involving your livestock to the police
- Check your livestock regularly. Don't ignore it if they are making more noise than usual
- Check the security of boundary fencing/hedging and make regular checks of fields where animals are kept to ensure fences are not breached
- Use eartags, horn brands, freeze marking or tattooing to make animals more easily identifiable



Heritage Crime

- Many land owners have ancient monuments and archaeological areas within or near to their property
- It is recommended that instances of suspected theft or criminal damage involving a scheduled monument or an archaeological area should be reported to the police as soon as possible. A report should include a description of offenders and associated vehicles
- Carrying out work on a scheduled monument without consent should be reported to Natural England
- The vast majority of metal detectorists are law abiding and will only detect and search for objects on land where they have the landowner's permission
- A landowner cannot give permission for a person to use a metal detector on a scheduled monument
- Metal detecting in a specified location without consent could amount to theft
- Illegal detecting at night is sometimes referred to as 'Night Hawking'
- Report suspicious incidents to the police as soon as possible



Rural Watch is a free scheme set up to support communities in the fight against rural crime.

If you live in, work in or visit rural communities you are our eyes and ears. Join our police officers and a network of people who share information about crimes in rural areas.

The main aims of the Rural Watch scheme are to:

- Reduce local opportunities for crime and vandalism;
- Reinforce community spirit so that everyone can contribute towards the protection of their property;
- Introduce early warning systems in the farming and countryside areas;
- Improve the intelligence flow between rural communities and police.

Together we can actively take steps to prevent crime, report suspicious incidents and provide education and reassurance on the

issues that matter the most to rural communities.

Find out more on the West Mercia Police website.

Rural and Business Officers

The Police and Crime Commissioner has invested in 15 dedicated Rural and Business Officers, and supported the establishment of Wildlife Officers throughout the force. These officers can provide specialist support to individuals and communities.

The Rural and Business Officers provide valuable crime reduction and signposting advice. For more information and to arrange a free visit to assess the security of your home or business contact: ruralcrime@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Contact your Police and Crime Commissioner

To contact your Police and Crime Commissioner:

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