



**REPORT TO: POLICE AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
21 NOVEMBER 2019**

SUBJECT: THEMATIC REPORT – RURAL CRIME

**BY: CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT CAMPBELL THOMSON, DIVISIONAL
POLICE COMMANDER, NORTH EAST DIVISION, POLICE
SCOTLAND**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee about Rural Crime.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (J) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the monitoring of delivery of the Police and Fire & Rescue Services in Moray.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Police and Fire & Rescue Services Committee scrutinise and note the information provided in this report in relation to Rural Crime.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Rural crime is considered as any crime that affects those living, working or visiting rural areas and includes theft of property, machinery, vehicles and livestock, along with environmental, heritage and wildlife crime. Each crime type is unique and requires specialist knowledge and strong partnership arrangements to prevent, investigate and detect.
- 3.2 This approach is well evidenced when it comes to wildlife crime which is already well supported through a network of agencies and policing resources within North East Division, mirroring the policies and strategies of the national approach. Police Scotland is a key member of the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime in Scotland (PAWS) and through specialist full and part time Wildlife Officers and local Officers, prevention and enforcement work is carried out in the heart of communities alongside local residents and partner organisations.
- 3.3 Rural communities are safe places to live, work, visit and enjoy. However, the personal and financial impact of crime in rural areas can be significant and detrimental to livestock, crops and business grown over generations.

- 3.4 The remoteness of rural locations can attract criminals into the area intent on committing crime. Serious and Organised Crime Groups (SOCG's) are often linked to rural, heritage and wildlife crime particularly in relation to theft of agricultural machinery, livestock, poaching, hare-coursing and Cannabis cultivations. Evidence suggests this may be relevant within the North East with examples of SOCG's involved in a diverse range of crimes from cattle and plant thefts to the large scale manufacturing and distribution of Cannabis and other drugs in the area.
- 3.5 This report details Police Scotland's response to crimes in rural areas including the development of existing and new innovative partnership arrangements to ensure a relevant, appropriate and effective response; delivering lean, agile policing, centred on the changing requirements of customers, services and communities now and in the future.

4. RESPONSE

- 4.1 Policing local communities evolves constantly, however, it is recognised that a collaborative approach is the ideal model to prevent and detect crime and to address the increasing levels of vulnerability evident within communities.
- 4.2 Local Officers have been developed with greater focus on the range of crimes which occur in remote and rural areas. Opportunities to maximise the availability, skills and experience of Special Constables to increase visibility in more rural communities and to further harness existing relationships with those living and working in the area have also been taken.
- 4.3 North East Division has appointed Chief Inspector Norman Stevenson to take the lead locally to address Rural Crime and Safety. Chief Inspector Stevenson links in directly with national representatives of the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC). On 1 November 2019, a visit to Moray from Inspector Alan Dron, the National Rural Crime Co-ordinator from Safer Communities, was welcomed to discuss the very positive work in the North East and build on the collaborative vision of partners. The local translation is delivered in the form of the North East PARC with senior representatives from over 25 organisations and stakeholders involved in rural affairs and the rural economy; the aim of which is to build a collaborative approach to identify and tackle rural crime and to promote safety throughout rural communities.
- 4.4 The Partnership strategy of the North East PARC very much aligns to and delivers locally on the strategies outlined in the national forum; protecting North East rural communities through a focus on prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance. The strategy is detailed in the North East Rural Crime & Safety Strategy (**Appendix 1**) and identifies how the North East PARC seeks to prevent crime both as a partnership and in conjunction with local people and how as a collective, incidents, risks and the potential for harm are responded to effectively in order to tackle crime and promote safety. Governance is delivered through quarterly meetings, chaired by Chief Inspector Stevenson, the most recent taking place on Thursday 10 October 2019.

- 4.5 In a Moray context, the partnership is evident through the Spey Fishery Board's involvement from inception. The benefit of this relationship has been borne out through Police Scotland and the Spey Fishery Board coming together to address the protection of river stocks from poachers, providing expert advice on crime prevention matters for certain areas of the River Spey, thus assisting in the protection of valuable fish stocks from poachers.
- 4.6 Internal governance structures have been introduced to review each and every rural crime to ensure the most appropriate resource - whether that be local policing, CID or other specialist - retains ownership and progresses each enquiry to maximise investigative opportunities.
- 4.7 This strategy supports the needs and expectations of local communities. It reflects the Community Planning Partnerships across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray and supports the different Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIP) across the North East. It is designed to assist partner organisations with developing and delivering their strategic plans for the North East.
- 4.8 The partnership arrangements also help identify alternative routes to support individuals and communities, including through charities such as RSABI (formerly known as The Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institute) which offers emotional, practical and financial support in times of need to those, including dependents, involved in the farming, crofting and growing industries.
- 4.9 Positive and structured use of the Media, in all of its forms have been a key component of the new strategy. Community engagement with the many different organisations representing rural businesses and affairs, as well as the wider communities and visitors alike, is essential.
- 4.10 'Rural Watch Scotland' which is an extension of the Neighbourhood Watch Scotland movement and endorsed by SPARC continues to grow. Rural Watch is aimed specifically at rural communities across Scotland and aims to bring all the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch to all rural communities irrespective of location, size or demographics. There is good evidence of communities engaging in the scheme with two thousand participants across the North East.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Moray Council's responsibilities with regards to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 are directly relevant to Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

This report is presented to the Moray Police and Fire & Rescue Services Committee within its remit for local scrutiny of the Police.

(c) Financial implications

There are no identified financial implications.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no identified risk implications.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no identified staffing implications.

(f) Property

Not applicable.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Not applicable.

(h) Consultations

The Local Police Plan, upon which the performance is reporting, was subject to consultation with elected representatives, and was heavily influenced by ongoing feedback from local communities within the Moray Council area.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Rural crime is widely recognised as affecting all and it is essential that a collaborative approach continues to prevent and detect such crime.

6.2 National strategies have been defined and have been locally adapted to set firm foundations for all to work with to ensure the focus remains in making the North East a hostile place for criminals and a safe place to live and work.

6.3 Through this collaborative approach, the North East PARC will continue to equip and direct resources to engage with communities to prevent crime and where crime has occurred to carry out a thorough investigation to detect offenders.

Author of Report: Chief Inspector Norman Stevenson
North East Division
Police Scotland

Background Papers: North East Scotland Rural Crime & Safety Strategy 2018-20

Ref: