



Operation Randall

tackling rural crime
Newsletter

Issue 39 | November 2023

 @RuralCrimeNfk

Introduction

I can't believe we have hit November already - this year has just disappeared before us. This last month has been an interesting one on the weather front and along with it, plenty of challenges for the community and policing. We started with an incredibly mild period of weather at the beginning of the month. We were then hit with Storm Babet which brought us levels of rain many of us had never seen. Some of the images from around the country are truly shocking and my thoughts are firmly with those who have lost loved ones, belongings and so much more. That said, these incidents are often timely reminders that there are people who selflessly go out of their way to help one another and their communities which has been great to see.

From a policing perspective, these incidents also put pressure on the frontline and our control room, with resources required to deal with many extra weather-related calls, working alongside our partners. Please always take notice of signs displayed. We received many calls of vehicles getting stuck driving through flooded water despite relevant signs being present. Remember the golden rules... Drive to arrive and drive at a speed that will allow you to stop well within the distance you can see to be clear. Do you really know what's around the corner? Just because it was clear yesterday, it might not be today!

Let's hope November brings us a slightly more settled period and we can enjoy the events this month brings. This will start with the classic bonfire night and moving into the many of our Christmas light switch on events.

Engagement Events

Typically, the number of things we can get involved in during this time of year in the community often fall off however this month we have several engagements to look forward to.

Later this month we have been invited to the Norfolk NFU AGM. We have also been asked to deliver a rural crime update to the East Norfolk NFU Group where we look forward to seeing many people from the rural community.

This past month we attended a virtual 'Rural Crime and Technology Solutions' event, alongside the PCC Giles Orpen-Smellie, where many case studies of using modern technology to prevent crime were discussed. As a team, we also attended the 'Rural and Wildlife Crime Enforcers' annual conference which is an invaluable opportunity to again learn from others from across policing and other partner agencies.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

PC Chris Shelley | christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk | 07900 407106

Firework/Bonfire Reminders

As we move into November, we see the end of the Halloween festivities. Please make sure you dispose of decorations appropriately as some spider web decorations can be dangerous to small mammals and birds. Scientists and ecologists have raised concerns recently around the disposal of pumpkins. Please avoid dumping these in woods and other park type areas, not only are they unsightly but you're also committing criminal offences in fly tipping or littering. On top of that, they seem to have a dire effect on one of our rapidly declining mammals - hedgehogs. They seem to enjoy eating them however they have little nutritional value due to the way their bodies process them. It causes them to have diarrhoea at a time when they must be looking to build their winter reserves.

Not everyone enjoys bonfire night so if you plan to have some fireworks, its always a good idea to notify your neighbours, especially if they have animals.

If you plan to have a bonfire and have long had it prepared, it is a good idea to move it slightly in case any wildlife has taken up residence, in particular hedgehogs. At least give it a good poke (gently!) before lighting to try and disturb any resting creatures.

How to keep your pets safe this bonfire evening;
Always keep dogs and cats inside when fireworks are being let off,

Close all windows and doors and block off cat flaps,

Ensure dogs are wearing some form of ID,

Prepare a den for your pet where it can feel safe and comfortable,

Let your pet pace around, whine, miaow and hide if it wants to,

Try not to cuddle and comfort pets as they will think you are worried too,

Avoid leaving pets alone during whilst fireworks are being let off,

Don't tie your dog up outside while fireworks are being let off,

Never take your dog to a firework display.

Hare Coursing Update

This month has seen a steady rise in reports of hare coursing which obviously means we have stepped up our enforcement action. PC Lovelock and the West Moonshot team arrested four individuals, seized a vehicle and four dogs. The four involved have been bailed while the case is built and further information is retrieved from electronic devices.

We have also seized two vehicles in the South Norfolk area which had been left in farmers fields having been involved in coursing and criminal damage of the fields. Those investigations are ongoing to identify those responsible.

WhatsApp Group

The Operation Randall WhatsApp group is expanding. At present the group mainly consists of partner agencies, key landowners and administrators of other social media rural groups. I am currently looking at increasing the size of this group so if you meet one or more of the above criteria – work for a partner agency, key landowner or you administer another rural group on social media - or if you think you would benefit or be able to contribute in any way, I want to hear from you. You can contact me on email at christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk

Bats—don't fall the wrongside of the law!

We are continuing to see a rising trend in the amount of reports we receive involving bat roosts being destroyed or disturbed. We currently have a number of ongoing investigations because of the planning process which causes these come to light. Sadly, dealing with bats in properties can incur extra costs to the project but it is not an excuse to ignore them and cut corners. It could end up being far more expensive in the long run and delay the process even further.

All bat roosts are protected, whether they are being actively used at the time or not, there are no defences for destroying or damaging a roost without the relevant Natural England licence in place before the work starts. Should you discover a bat or evidence of bats in an area you are working, you should cease work immediately and seek expert advice. National story involving bats below taken from: <http://nwcu.police.uk>
A Derby-based property developer has been ordered to pay a total of £14,435.17 in a prosecution brought by Natural England for breaching the conditions of a 'European Protected Species Bat Mitigation Licence'.

On 4 September 2023 at Southern Derbyshire Magistrates' Court, Patrick Weekes, aged 55 and of Radbourne Construction Limited, Vernongate, Derby, pleaded guilty to four offences relating to a housing development in Harehill, near Ashbourne, Derbyshire. He was fined £3,200 plus a victim surcharge of £1,280 and ordered to pay full prosecution costs of £9,955.17.

A 'European Protected Species Bat Mitigation Licence' was issued to the defendant in October 2020. The licence permitted the capture, disturbance, transport, and damage of resting places for Brown long-eared (Plecotus auritus) and Common pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus) bats, and the damage of a breeding site for Brown long-eared bats.

The court was told that Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Service had been made aware of potential breaches of the licence issued to the defendant in October 2022.

Following a compliance check, Natural England's Enforcement Team led a multi-agency site visit in February 2023 which evidenced that the defendant had breached the conditions of his licence on four counts:

Failed to install Bitumen type 1F roofing felt with hessian matrix as agreed in the licence. This roofing felt is designed to be non-breathable which mitigates the risks to bats. Breathable roofing membranes, such as the one installed by the defendant, can cause bats to become entangled in the loose fibres and result in their injury and/or death. This is a significant risk to bat welfare.

Failed to install the compensation and mitigation measures as agreed in the licence. Mitigation and compensation measures are included in licences to reduce the harm to bats, mitigate for any impacts, and where

impacts cannot be mitigated then compensation is designed to maintain the Favourable Conservation Status as required in legislation. In this case, the agreed compensation in the form of various specific ridge crevices and access tiles to allow bats to roost within the roof were not installed, and the loft space set aside in one building to compensate for the loss of a Brown long-eared maternity roost was unsuitable and did not meet the requirements set out in the licence.

Failed to complete post-development monitoring as agreed in the licence. Monitoring is vital to understand whether the impacts of bats have been successfully mitigated and compensated for, as well as determining if there are any issues with the compensation that need to be addressed to ensure they remain suitable for use by bats.

Stripped the roof of a property containing a Common pipistrelle day roost without direct ecological supervision, as agreed in the licence. Ecologist supervision is required wherever there is a risk that bats can be encountered such as stripping a roof of a property with a confirmed bat roost present. This requirement is to ensure that works are done in a sympathetic way towards bats and if any bats are found during the process, they can be safely transferred to a suitable bat box on site.

The court was further told that Natural England had taken the decision to prosecute the defendant because these breaches were considered so significant as to have impacted the welfare and Favourable Conservation Status of the bat species involved. The breaches left Brown long-eared bats with no suitable maternity roosting provision within the site, and significantly reduced the suitability of roosting opportunities for Common pipistrelle bats, as well as endangering the welfare of both species.

In sentencing the defendant, the court noted that he had acted in contravention to the professional advice provided by both their own ecological consultant and Natural England, and that the defendant did not carry out work to mitigate the harmful impact on bats when so instructed by Natural England.

Steph Bird-Halton, Natural England's National Delivery Director, commented:

"Natural England does not take the decision to prosecute lightly. However, where individuals or companies place the welfare or Favourable Conservation Status of protected species at risk, we will not hesitate to take targeted and proportionate enforcement action against them.

"I would like to thank the Bat Conservation Trust's Wildlife Crime Project for the assistance they provided in this case."

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In The Countryside in November

November in a countryside brings a lull in activity, not only on the farm but also amongst our wildlife.

Many of our native mammals are quickly building up their reserves to get them through the winter. The hedges still have a few berries on them and all the chestnuts and acorns are dropping for the squirrels and mice to clear up. Our other popular mammals, hedgehogs and bats, will be entering hibernation and it is essential they are not disturbed whilst hibernating. Bats will unlikely be seen until around May time now. Hedgehogs are a little less predictable with some not fully hibernating at all and their behaviour changes significantly depending on the weather. That said, if you see hedgehogs out and about during daylight hours, please seek advice as this is not normal behaviour at anytime of year.

Many of our native birds will be enjoying the fruits of the hedgerows for a few more weeks but these will quickly disappear. If you can provide some fat balls and nuts over the coming months, they will be enjoyed. It's a lovely sight to see in your garden during these slightly duller months.

Our coastline and waterways see an influx of migratory birds from colder climates, who enjoy our milder winters. You will also see fields of geese, particularly the pink-footed geese, who love to feed on the waste sugar beet tops which are left behind from the harvester during the winter period. This can be a very surreal sight to see fields full of geese in quiet inland areas.

Our farms tend to be a little quieter but let's be honest, there is rarely a moment to take stock on a farm! Arable farms will be making use of any dry weather windows to get cultivations done and the last of any autumn planted crops in the ground (given how

wet it has been I doubt there will be much more in the ground this side of Christmas now!). Otherwise, it is a vital period to complete annual maintenance on machines and buildings.

Livestock farms probably hit one of their most intensive periods, with nearly all livestock now inside, which is labour intensive with daily feeding and clean bedding needed. Cattle do not generally thrive outside over winter unless they can be kept on some very free draining soil or a purposely grown crop like stubble turnips. Sheep cope a little better and you will see these outside throughout winter as their small feet don't cause so much damage and mess. November is often a very important month for commercial sheep farms as the tup will likely go in with the ewes. The general rule is if the ewe is tugged on the 5th of November she should lamb on the 1st of April. Sheep only lamb once a year and are reliant on seasonal change to bring them into season, they come into season as the daylight gets shorter (there are a couple of exceptions to this, but they are generally not seen as commercial breeds. Purebred Berrichon and Dorset's are two who can breed all year round).



Diesel/Plant Machinery Thefts

Whilst it sadly isn't anything new, there have been several larger plant type machinery stolen in recent months including telehandlers, mini diggers and slightly smaller items like generators and quadbikes. The demand for these items has raised significantly due to the war in Ukraine and most are being quickly shipped out of the country.

Whilst we have recovered some items with assistance from colleagues from the national project tackling this and from other neighbouring forces. One of the continuing frustrations when dealing with this sort of criminality is owners who do not know the individual serial numbers for some of this expensive kit.

It is essential we have those details, as soon as it is reported stolen, so we can record it on our national computer. If it is then stopped on the back of a lorry three counties away, it can be identified as stolen immediately. This is also sent to our international colleagues which the National Rural Crime Team have built up strong relationships over the last 12 months to tackle this issue. All you need to do is have a little black book of serial numbers/vin numbers from plant, particularly those not road registered, expensive tools, and any other expensive equipment. It is highly likely that it will have a unique serial number. We can all get complacent and think it would never happen to us, of course it might not but if it does, this information is critical.

Conclusion

Thank you again for taking the time to read. I can't believe by this time in a couple of weeks when writing this again, we will be weeks away from Christmas and a new year! Have a great month and as always, any questions or concerns please get in contact.

The police will never
ask you for cash or
your bank details.

STOP...
this is a scam!

THE
TRAP



Police are appealing for witnesses following a burglary in Taverham.

The incident occurred on 20 October between 7am and 7pm at a property on Broom Close, Taverham where a large quantity of cash was stolen.

Officers would like to speak to anyone who may have witnessed the incident or may have any relevant doorbell footage. Anyone with any information is asked to contact PC Keira Grint at Aylsham Police Station on 101 quoting crime reference 36/75022/23.

Alternatively, you can contact Crimestopper anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Appeal following van break-ins across Norfolk

Officers are appealing for information after a number of vans were damaged and tools were taken in Attleborough, Swaffham, Downham Market, Sprowston and Earlham.

They all happened during the evenings and overnight between October 12 and October 16 2023 and involved unknown people breaking locks on vans on private driveways. In total, 16 incidents have been reported to us over that time – with tools and equipment being taken from 10 vans.

The incidents happened in the following locations: Hargham Road, Attleborough at around 4.15am on 14 October 2023, no items were stolen

Chapel Road, Attleborough between 8.30pm on 13 October and 4.30am on 14 October 2023, tools and equipment stolen

Four incidents on Chapel Road, Attleborough between 2am-4am on 14 October 2023, tools were stolen from two vans

Dodds Close, Attleborough between 2am-4am on 14 October 2023, tools and power tools were stolen
Short Road, Attleborough between 3am-3.20am on 14 October 2023, no tools were taken

Winchcomb Road, Earlham between 5pm on 13 October 2023 and 11.30am 14 October, no items were taken

Cadge Road, Earlham between 2am and 2.20am on 14 October 2023, tools were taken

Tills Road, Sprowston between 11.30pm on 13 October and 1am on 14 October, tools were taken

Church View Close, Sprowston between 4pm on 13 October and 9am on 14 October, tools were stolen

Russell Avenue, Sprowston between 6pm on 13 October and 10am on 16 October, tools were taken

Greenhoe Place, Swaffham between 4pm on 14 October and 7.30am on 15 October, power tools were taken

Wimbotsham Road, Downham Market between 5pm on Thursday 12 October and 6.30am 16 October, power tools were stolen

Lynn Road, Downham Market around 2am on 16 October 2023, nothing was taken

If you saw anything suspicious in these areas, or have doorbell footage that we haven't seen, then please contact PC James Barrett at Thetford Police Station on 101 quoting crime ref 36/73443/23.

We're advising people to take sensible precautions if they keep vans on private driveways. Don't leave tools or equipment in vans overnight and try to back vans up against walls or garages so thieves cannot access the rear doors.

The police will never ask you for cash or your bank details.

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THE
TRAP

