

RURAL CRIME UPDATE – Essex Police Sergeant Paul Downes



The GTRET* team are fully operational and have been very busy dealing with a variety of issues that affect the rural communities.

We ensure that each unauthorised encampment is recorded correctly and monitored to ensure that there is no significant disruption. When there is, we do act using powers available to us and also work in partnership with the land owner to ensure that they are doing all that can be done. We often receive criticism due to a poor understanding of our roles and responsibilities against those of our partners and land owners but I can assure you that we are working within the agreed protocol.



Hare coursing is causing concerns among the farming communities and we are patrolling the rural areas in a bid to combat this. We link in with our policing teams across the county and offer our support. We also take the lead to organise operations to combat coursing and poaching and have spent a significant amount of our time on those operations where we act upon information and intel in an attempt to predict where they will be and to be ready to disrupt their activities through arrests where possible. We have seized vehicles belonging to the hare coursers and crushed them.

We work in partnership with local authorities and the Environment Agency to support them in dealing with suspected fly tipplers and have been on operations with both to deal with waste management issues.



The majority of the team are now qualified commercial drone pilots and we are currently seeking funding to purchase our own. In the meantime we use one on loan from the drone team. The drone has been used successfully to capture evidence in relation to unauthorised encampments where there was criminal activity and as a deterrent against hare coursing.

We meet with rural communities through farm watch meetings and various events across the county and are always willing, subject to other demand, to attend local meetings to discuss issues although local parishes must realise that with such a small team while we are supporting meetings we are not out patrolling therefore management of our time is essential.

We are seeking the support of the special constabulary and active citizens and would encourage anyone interested in assisting us to consider joining our team in the fight against rural crime.

*GTRET – Gypsy, Traveller and Rural Engagement Team

PLUNKETT UNITES RURAL YOUNGSTERS



The Plunkett Foundation is highlighting ways to help youngsters overcome isolation in the countryside. It is the latest stage in the charity's [#thelittlethings campaign](#) – which aims to shine a spotlight on loneliness and encourage people to reach out to those suffering from it. “There is plenty of research showing that loneliness doesn’t discriminate and you’re as likely to be suffering whether you’re 90 or 19,” says Plunkett.

“In rural areas, the problem is amplified by practical issues such as transport, lack of jobs and poor digital connectivity which particularly affect younger members of society.”

Plunkett Foundation says community co-operatives – pubs, shops and other organisations which have been saved and taken over by the local community – have lots to offer rural youngsters.

They include volunteering opportunities, one-stop shops for parents, networking and social interaction. “Volunteering looks great on a young person’s CV, and is especially valuable in rural areas where opportunities for teens are often few and far between,” says Plunkett.

Many community co-operatives have seen young people volunteering as part of the much-valued Duke of Edinburgh Award, it adds. Now Plunkett wants rural people to use its maps to locate their nearest co-operative pub and community shop – and pay them a visit.

Rural areas can be very lonely for teenagers who find it hard to see friends, it says – but volunteering in a community co-operative can be a good way of meeting new people.

To get involved and continue reading please [click here](#)

VILLAGE HALLS 'VITAL SERVICE PROVIDERS'



Village halls are vital when it comes to delivering rural services, Defra Minister Lord Gardiner of Kimble has said.

The rural affairs minister described the community buildings as the “beating heart” of rural England. He was speaking ahead of Village Halls Week, which was launched in January.

Organised by ACRE – the national network of Rural Community Councils, the special week aims highlighted the work done by village halls and the volunteers who run them.

Lord Gardiner said he was delighted to celebrate the vital role played by village

halls within communities across the country.

“Whether it is hosting essential services like post offices and doctors’ surgeries, or simply creating a social space for local communities, village halls are the beating heart of rural England.”

Important network - He added: “I would like to congratulate all of the volunteers for their tireless work in maintaining and supporting this network and helping our rural areas to prosper.”

[Click here](#) for the full article



RCCE played its full part in #VillageHallsWeek, with Village Halls Adviser, Sue Sheppard organising two special events for village hall trustees. The events gave trustees from across Essex an opportunity to have a look at the recently refurbished Fyfield Village Hall and the brand new hall at Peldon & Wigboroughs, as well as an opportunity to network, share experiences and meet representatives of funders and other supportive organisations.

CHURCH SPIRES TO BOOST BROADBAND



Church spires across the UK will be used to boost digital connectivity and broadband speeds in rural areas.

The decision follows an agreement between the government and the Church of England. It encourages the Church of England to use its buildings and other property to improve broadband, mobile and WiFi connectivity for local communities. Some 65% of Anglican churches and 66% of parishes in England are in rural areas. Their locations at the heart of local communities mean they are often well placed to address connectivity and coverage problems.

The government said using churches, other properties and farm buildings would help everyone get good quality mobile connectivity where they live, work and travel.

The agreement was signed by the National Church Institutions (NCIs) of the Church of England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Defra. Communities secretary Matt Hancock said: "Churches are central features and valued assets for local communities up and down the country. "This agreement with the Church of England will mean that even a 15th century building can help make Britain fit for the future improving people's lives by boosting connectivity in some of our hardest-to-reach areas." Improved digital connectivity would bring a range of benefits to rural communities – including better access to online public services. It would also improve social interaction between families and friends.

To continue reading please [click here](#)

FARM LEADERS HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR CALLS DEMANDING FAIRER FUNDING FOR RURAL POLICE FORCES.



The National Farmers' Union (NFU) said rural communities were being "left behind" despite rising levels of concern about crime. Police funding plans would continue to provide almost 24% less per head in rural areas than in their urban counterparts, it said. Details of likely police force grants are contained in a provisional Home Office report.

Analysis by the Rural Services Network suggests per person direct funding in predominantly urban areas would be £206 on average in 2018/19, compared to £167 in mostly rural forces.

NFU chief land management adviser Sam Durham said: "Rural areas have unique policing challenges and it is essential funding is available to take these specific needs into account.

"This report highlights concerns they are being left behind to become a soft target for criminals."

The bill for rural crime in the UK was around £40 million and many NFU members were experiencing fear, intimidation and threats of violence.

Vehicle theft, hare coursing and fly-tipping were contributing to widespread anger, frustration and worry, said Mr Durham. A recent NFU Mutual report found that being watched, or 'staked out', is the biggest concern for people living in the countryside.

BBC VOWS TO 'LEAD THE WAY' WITH SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BAN BY 2020

BBC director general Tony Hall said the decision had been taken after the TV series Blue Planet II highlighted the scale of ocean plastic pollution. Hall said he had been "shocked" by the plastic waste featured in last year's nature documentary narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

"Like millions of people watching Blue Planet II, I was shocked to see the avoidable waste and harm created by single-use plastic," Hall said.



"We all need to do our bit to tackle this problem, and I want the BBC to lead the way."



Plastic cups and cutlery will be scrapped by the end of 2018, a move which is expected to displace more than two million plastic cups used by BBC visitors and staff each year. Plastic containers will be removed from canteens by 2019. The phase-out will start at the BBC's department in Salford this month, where the broadcaster is also going to be trialing a coffee cup recycling scheme.

To read the full article please [click here](#)

FANTASTIC JOB OPPORTUNITY!



Four Voluntary and Community Sector organisations work in partnership to deliver a targeted service to help older people in Essex. The "Community Agents Essex" project is a countywide network of agents and volunteers who will support older people and informal carers to find and develop independent living solutions from within their local community.

Community Agents Essex Enquiries Officer

- 24.5 Hours per week
- Salary: circa £18,000 per annum pro rata
- Reporting to: Community Services Manager

Community Agents are looking to recruit an enthusiastic, well organised Enquiries Officer for the Community Agents Essex project.

The person will operate a telephone/email information line to receive new enquiries and provide information about the Community Agents Essex project. The post will report to the Community Services Manager employed by Rural Community Council of Essex.

If you would like to apply and for further information please [click here](#)

ESSEX BIG WEEKEND



Hundreds of free pairs of tickets for attractions and fun-filled activities across the county are up for grabs via an online ballot.

A huge variety of Essex tourist attractions and related businesses will be opening their doors or offering special gifts to lucky ticket holders on 24 and 25 March - all part of the [Visit Essex Big Weekend](#) celebration of our county's tourism industry.

Don't miss out, [register your interest here](#). Essex residents can apply for as many tickets as they like, but there will be a limit of two winning tickets per household.

B IS FOR BIVOUACKING: MINDFULNESS IN NATURE



The simplicity of camping out under the stars, with nothing but the natural world around you, will encourage you to be more present – one of many ways to improve physical and mental wellbeing

To learn more about bivouacking please [click here](#)

FULL ERP FUTURE MEETING DATES 2018

Date: Tuesday 24th April 2018

Time: 2pm – 5pm

Venue: Essex Young Farmers Conference Centre, Whitbreads Farm Lane, Chelmsford CM3 3LQ

WARNING
THIS IS AN OPERATION BUZZARD AREA

OPERATION BUZZARD

Tackling rural crime with the help of rural communities

Operation Buzzard is an initiative to coordinate all rural crime-related operations in Essex. These operations will make best use of all the specialist teams and partners we have to ensure we are in the best position to tackle a range of rural crime offences.

Find out more, and how you can help by going to essex.police.uk/operationbuzzard, or scanning this QR code with your smartphone.

ESSEX POLICE
Protecting and serving Essex

CRIMESTOPPERS
0800 555 111

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101



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Compiled and edited by Lizzie Rose, Rural Community Council of Essex. Rural Community Council of Essex Registered Charity No. 1097009. Company registered in England and Wales No. 4609624