

# Rural Task Force



**Kent  
Police**



The last 2 months have continued to be a testing time for all, the team have been required to support our Roads Policing Team with Operation Brock and Fennel. This has limited their time for dedicated rural work. The team have continued to engage with the community whenever possible via the Farm Watch Whats App and thank you all for your continued support of the team.

You will see from the below report that the team have been busy addressing Rural, Wildlife, Environmental and Heritage Crimes. The team continues to work closely with not only our colleagues within the police but also our partners from other agencies.

As we enter the lambing season livestock worrying incidents continue to be reported, all such incidents are investigated by the Rural Task Force, utilising where possible DNA evidence to support prosecutions. I am fully aware that these incidents are very distressing to all involved and dog owners are reminded to keep their dog on a lead when around livestock.

You will note that theft of machinery and other items from rural locations remain prevalent. I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone to regularly review their security ensuring sheds/ barns are locked and secure when not in use. Please remember to record and mark all property serial numbers so these can be passed to the police if you become a victim of crime.

PS Darren Walshaw

**Here is a snapshot of the work carried out by the Rural Task Force over the last eight weeks.**

## Rural Theft

Tracker activation for a stolen van at a site at Sevenoaks located by Kent Police. Stolen van was in the process of being stripped. Also found were other shells of vehicles and two large sealed safes. An appeal out on farm watch and a local farmer came out to help with recovery.



A large horse box was left abandoned in a layby in an unusual position. Registered Owner and insured from Dorset. Enquiries conducted and identified the vehicle has broken down and the owner is going to get it recovered.



Attempt Burglary at a Farm near Bossingham for Cocker Spaniel Dogs kept at the site. A neighbour had gas bottles stolen at the same time. Offenders disturbed and left scene. RTF attended and conducted house to house and CCTV has picked two suspects. One of the suspect male was described as being tall and skinny. Mask and rope left at scene seized for forensics. Suspect has climbed over high fence into large purpose-built dog kennel.

RTF Officers attended a site in the Ashford area to try and affect the arrest of a male for the Offence of Burglary that took place on the 19/01/2021. Whilst at the address a Red Honda Quad bike was located. Checks completed and this was established to have been stolen from a Farm in the Romney Marsh area. Vehicle was recovered. Wanted male was spoken to on the phone as not at the location and was later arrested for the Burglary and the Theft of the Quad.



Ford Ranger was towing a Ifor Williams HB 550 Horse Trailer. Chassis checked showed Stolen marker from Reading. Trailer had been stolen twice over. Seized and enquiries to locate correct owner underway.

Following a stop check in Canterbury, a Stolen Ifor William's trailer from 2017 has been seized today, shows the importance of reporting these crimes and recording the chassis numbers etc.

[#iforwilliams](#) [#ruralcrime](#)  
[#stolenproperty](#)



## OP GALILEO (POACHING)

Report of Hare Coursers in the area of Brooklands New Romney. RTF attended and stop checked 2 Males in a Fiat vehicle. Also, in the vehicle was a light coloured lurcher. Both males were known for hare coursing offences. Both said they were walking/exercising together and lived together. No evidence of hare coursing at this incident but COVID penalty tickets issued.

RTF attended with Shepway CPT along with a drone to a report of possible hare coursing in Hastingleigh. A vehicle was located parked up unattended but no offences. Another vehicle was stopped & searched under poaching prevention act and seized for no tax.



RTF attended Queenbrough following report of poaching in progress. Three individuals were spotted in the distance with four dogs. Their vehicle was also located parked near to a five-bar gate. The males were met and stopped in the farmers field. They were in possession of catapults and 2 dead rabbits. The catapults were destroyed, and evidence secured, and the 3 detained males will be prosecuted for the offence of Day Time Poaching.

RTF attended Standhouse and spoke with informant in relation to poaching occurring during the night. Informant believes several pheasants were captured and taken however awaiting CCTV to confirm this. Informant states offenders gained access via damaging his fence causing around £150 worth of damage. Crime Report Submitted in relation to Criminal Damage.



Reports of vehicles driving on his Land and causing significant damage. Crime report submitted and enquiries ongoing.



## **Wildlife**

Report that a resident in Brenchley that the lighting in 3 barns being developed into residential properties was being left on 24/7. The barns are known to contain bats and this is a tactic that is used to try and evict bats. The site had been attended on two occasions by RTF during darkness to evidence this, but no lighting was seen. Enquiries were made with the owner who advised that no lighting had been left on and that no one had been to the barn since the beginning of December. It was established that the owner had applied to Natural England for a licence to relocate the bats. Currently no evidence of an offence

RTF Officers supported by CPT Dover and RSPCA executed a search warrant at a site near to Dover following information being received that wild birds were being kept at the location with possible stolen birds. Words of advice were given in respect of 4 Goldfinches found in an aviary without rings but no stolen birds were found or seized.

## **Animal Welfare**

RTF Specialists attended a location near to Upchurch to make enquiries to a fox that had been caught in a snare and had subsequently died. The landowner was identified and spoken to about the placing of snares around their land. They maintained that the snares were being lawfully set and being checked every 24 hours. No offences identified.

## **Livestock**

Sheep attack at a Farm at Molash where 1 sheep killed and 4 injured. RTF contacted both the owner of the sheep and the dog. Dog Owner was genuinely horrified by what had happened and agreed to pay full compensation whilst agreeing to take measures to control their dog. This was accepted by the Farmer.

Report from Hawkhurst of a dead in lamb ewe that appeared to have been chased by dogs and suffered heart attack. Cases of alcohol located with car tracks. CSI advised no forensic opportunities. No witnesses so report closed pending any new information coming to light.

A sheep was attacked by a dog on a farm at Pembury. Victim states that there is a public footpath that runs alongside the field and the dog owner could well not have been aware. No forensic opportunities as the sheep has now been put down and been disposed of.

RTF Specials dealt with a report of a livestock attack at Sutton Valence. Dog Owner was a neighbour and there was a witness to the attack. Sheep owner requested to be compensated for the treatment to the 4 injured sheep. RTF attended neighbouring property and spoke to Dog Owner who was very apologetic. Property was not fenced appropriately however they did have all the fence posts ready to be used, weather has however halted their ability to put them up. Owner agreed to keep her dog on a lead whenever the dog is out of the property in the future and ensured it would not happen again, and confirmed she is happy to liaise with Farmer to arrange recompense.



RTF Specials responded to Livestock worrying incident at Edenbridge. Farmer report incident where two Terrier dogs from a nearby property chased a flock of 150 pregnant ewes causing one to abort her lamb. The Farmer was upset because there had been a similar incident two weeks earlier and he spoke to the dog owner who agreed to keep his dogs under control. For the second incident the Farmer had approached the Dog Owner who would not accept responsibility for his dog's actions. RTF visited the Dog Owner who was given stern words of advice, admitted liability and agreed to contact the farmer and discuss compensation, which is what the Victim had requested RTF to facilitate. A record will be kept of the warning by RTF so if there are any further incidents involving the same dog owner enforcement action will be taken.

## Heritage

Theft of a Heavily modified Land Rover Discovery from Great Chart Near Ashford. The Vehicle was later used in the attempted theft of 3 very heavy high value bronze Statues, two of which have been recovered. Appeals have been circulated for the 1 outstanding statue. Contact made with the owner of the Land Rover who stated he had located his vehicle hidden in some woods. Vehicle recovered by Ashford LPT for CSI examination and both crime reports relating to the attempt theft of the statues and the theft of the Land Rover updated.



## Op Assist/Fly Tipping

RTF discovered a large scale fly tip at the entrance of Hoads Wood off of Bethersden Rd, Great Chart and identified evidence linking it to an address in Ashford, this has been attended and occupants were horrified to find out it had been fly tipped. Company details obtained and screen shots secured of messaged between homeowner and company. Evidence has been sent to the Enforcement Team at Ashford Council.



RSPB nature reserve at Bromley Cooling Rochester. Males caught by staff emptying bags of soil on track on the reserve. Staff blocked the males and vehicle. Medway Council Environmental Enforcement Team attended with police. A £400 FPN issued to both occupants for fly tipping. Vehicle not seized as it was confirmed day rental hire.



RTF worked with Maidstone Council Environmental Enforcement Officers on 26/01/21 on a pre-planned Op Assist day of actions. Some of the results are below:

- A silver Toyota Yaris was identified as illegally dumping waste at Rowan House, Springwood Road, Barming. The offender for the fly tipping is a male and the image taken by the informant has been viewed and the male has been identified as the ex-partner of the registered keeper of the Yaris. Enquires by RTF revealed that this male was also wanted on an Arrest Warrant relating to the Breach of a Court Order. RTF saw this vehicle being driven with two people in it. The vehicle was followed onto Tonbridge Road and came to a natural stop at Tesco Petrol Station. The vehicle was blocked in and a male got out of the driver's seat and started to walk off. He was detained and found to be the ex-partner of the female owner of the vehicle. He was arrested for a Breach of Court Order No Bail Warrant. The arrested male has no driving licence or insurance and was reported for these offences. The vehicle was seized by MBC for the fly tipping offence and he will also be issued with a £400 FPN.



- A white Ford Transit flatbed was stopped on the A20, Bearsted. The vehicle had initially been sighted at Newnham Court and whilst turning around to stop it was lost. It appeared that it had taken evasive action to avoid being located and had travelled through Bearsted Green before going onto the A20. There were grab boards on the rear and the van was full of scrap aluminium. The vehicle was located and stopped. There were 3 male occupants in the vehicle. Driver stated that they had collected the metal from a business in Newnham Court but denied that they were collecting scrap door to door. Vehicle is shown as un-insured; however, Driver has a Traders Policy which was checked with the Broker. Driver was issued with an FPN by MBC for not having a waste carrier's licence.



- A Volkswagen Golf located at Randall Street, Maidstone had been identified as involved in a fly tipping in layby at Yelsted Lane, Maidstone on 23/12/2021. Vehicle seized by MBC for fly tipping offences.



- Range Rover located near to Farleigh Hill, Maidstone and was seized by MBC for fly tipping in a NHS owned bin.



RTF completed a joint operation with Swale Borough Council tackling fly tipping and the illegal transportation/storage of waste (Op Assist) on the 12<sup>th</sup> February. 5 vehicles were stopped where Enforcement action was taken, that included a vehicle being seized and 2 FPN's issued by SBC for £300 each.



RTF completed a joint operation with Maidstone Borough Council tackling fly tipping and the illegal transportation/storage of waste (Op Assist) on the 16<sup>th</sup> February. Numerous vehicles were stopped where Enforcement action was taken, that included a vehicle being seized and 2 FPN's issued by MBC for £400 each. In addition, a van was stopped near Forstall Road, Maidstone and officers noticed a strong smell coming from the vehicle. A search was conducted 5 bags of cannabis were located and seized. Driver was dealt with by RTF for the offence of cannabis possession.



A white Ford Transit was stopped outside Canterbury Wastewater Treatment Works, Sturry Road, Canterbury. The van was sign writing in the name of a Clearance Company. Driver produced a waste Carriers licence however did not have all the Waste Transfer notes present. The vehicle was full of black bag rubbish and turf and soil. Driver stated he was going to nearby Recycling Centre to dispose of the waste. Referred to Environmental Enforcement Officers.



A yellow Ford Transit Tipper was stopped on the Littlebourne Road in Canterbury due to several Bicycles in the rear of the vehicle. The driver stated the bicycles belonged to his family and he was going to take them to the Tip to dispose of them. Images of the bikes were taken by attending officers as that checks can be made against the bikes.



## Other Business

5-year-old child fell from his push along scooter and banged his head on the floor rendering him unconscious not breathing. Member of the public stopped and did mouth to mouth from which child recovered. Passing RTF patrol stopped and assisted, SECAS called by father of child but no Ambulances available, RTF conveyed child and father to Ashford Hospital, Child left with paediatrics team. Member of the public thanked by police and father for stopping his quick actions.

RTF working with Dover CSU about several reports over the last few weeks in relation to nuisance off road bikes. Plans to try and arrange a joint operation between the RTF and CSU to try and tackle the problem. This includes issue with a temporary closed byway at off of Slip lane at Alkham as well as land off a byway off at Scotland Common with grazing land owned by the MOD suffering damage as 4x4 vehicles leaving the byway and driving across grazing land.



At Westfield, Sole Road, Gillingham, around 20-25 reports of this a month of ASB Motorbikes. Land owner has been issued previously with a CPW for allowing the off roaders onto the field however this permission has now been withdrawn. On attendance the entrance to the field is a muddied track, attending vehicles would not have the ground clearance to be able to access. Bikes could be heard in the background and a foot patrol of the fields were conducted, the motorcycles were sighted and made off from police onto Lidsing Road. Area searched further but no trace.



There was a domestic violence incident at an address in Chatham where it was alleged that male suspect assaulted his partner, Stole her Car, and Mobile Phone. The stolen vehicle was reported as failing to stop in Old Dover Road, Canterbury. A pursuit then took place where vehicle eventually going off-road across a field and behind Chalk Pitt Farm, Bekesbourne, Canterbury. Two occupants decamped from the vehicle and made off. The driver was located a short time later up a bank between the railway line and a property in School Lane, Bekesbourne and arrested by RTF officers for Domestic Violence offences.

A silver Audi A3 was stopped on Grovewood Drive, Maidstone. Driver stated he had just bought the vehicle at Chatham and admitted to not having insurance and therefore vehicle seized with the driver receiving a Traffic Offence Report. Driver was also searched under S.23 Misuse of drugs act due to strong smell of cannabis; however no prohibited items found.



RTF assisted with a single vehicle RTC at Bluebell Hill. Single female occupant lost control of vehicle. No injuries but due to it being in the early hours and fast road patrol remained with vehicle until it was recovered.



RTF Specials Officer made enquiries following observing a video recording off duty of an incident of 2 off road motorcycle travelling on Columbus Ave Manston, along a public footpath and over a roundabout. The riders were identified and lived in Ramsgate. Officers were on their way to the home address to speak with the riders when they saw one of the motorbikes. They took the opportunity to stop him and deal. Both he and his father were issued with Section 59 warnings and warned about COVID compliance.



RTF Officers supported Community Policing Team at Margate with an ANPR led operation in the Thanet Area on the 5<sup>th</sup> February. During the day numerous vehicles were stopped that had ANPR stop markers recorded. Of note were a Ford Transit that was seized having been stopped and linked to 9 current fly tipping investigations and a vehicle recorded as stolen from London was also stopped and details passed to Met Police.



RTF supported a Joint OP with Medway and Maidstone CSU/ CPT and Specials targeting Rural ASB and illegal use of motorbikes/quads and vehicles. A repeated problem exacerbated by Lockdown on byways, farmland around The Downs, Rochester, St Peters Village, Lordswood, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham, Bredhurst, Boxley. RTF assisted with off road capability and drone support. Number of persons/motorbikes stopped and spoken to. Covid fines issued and one seizure for no Insurance and Section 59 and one motorbike dealt with for no tax.





Kind regards, Darren Walshaw

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