

Rural Crime in Suffolk

Criminal activity in Suffolk rural areas mirrors the overall experience of the rest of Suffolk - sexual crimes, anti-social behaviour, rape, assault, fraud, murder, vehicle crime and drugs. But there are crimes that specifically hurt and damage rural areas because of location, business type and vulnerability.

Across the UK, the cost of rural crime outlined in the NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report reached its highest level in eight years at £54.3m – an increase of nearly 9% on the previous year. With organised gangs targeting farm machinery, Suffolk farms saw the cost of crime soar to £1.45m *

*“Rural communities can feel as if they are a ‘criminal playground’ with illegal hare coursing experienced on their land by over 65% of farmers**. The personal cost of clearing domestic and commercial fly tipping is huge and the threat of criminal activity on your property is constant” says Elizabeth Hughes. “Criminals are actively out there, gathering information about farmers and targeting their property and businesses. It isn’t a happy thought, is it, that you are being watched constantly, that you are a potential target? Of organised and sophisticated criminals”.*

I believe that Suffolk Police activities key to tackling rural crime in Suffolk are:

- Continue to follow a policy of long-term support and retention of specialist rural crime Police officers, dedicated to working in specified rural areas with expertise in farming machinery theft, criminal damage to buildings, stock theft. Increase the numbers of police officers working in rural areas and resources allocated to this area of crime.
- Strong and effective cross agency partnership, led by the Police & Crime Commissioner, that crosses county borders into the Region and shares Police intelligence and good practice. We also need to be working closely with other countries anywhere where stolen machinery can be exported to.
- Robust Police connections with rural communities – sharing information and giving practical support in a timely manner and using modern communication and reporting technologies to track criminal activity. The Police must continue to expand working closely with rural businesses and communities to prevent and solve crime.
- Up to date and relevant intelligence maintained around criminal activity and community vulnerabilities. Hot Spots to be quickly identified and trends actively tracked, solutions adequately resourced.
- Monitored Police response to all rural crime issues.
- An increase and extension of directed Police and multi-agency support for people in rural areas who are adversely affected and isolated by domestic violence, violence in the home, murder and sexual assault.
- Improved information hubs – on-line, telephone and referral points - for everyone in Suffolk to access and linked Police response expectations.
- Promotion of Police initiatives and successes in solving and combatting the risk of rural crime. Aim to prove that Suffolk isn’t a ‘soft touch’ for criminals.
- Public campaigns about rural crime including Hare Coursing, Fly Tipping, stock interference and vandalism. Campaign also for higher penalties for these crimes.

Elizabeth Hughes

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*Source EADT on line 11 October 2020

**BBC News article 16 April 2021: *The NFU rural crime survey was carried out online and via phone across 10 areas of England and Wales between 21 January and 16 March 2021. There were 1,968 respondents, including 340 from East Anglia*