

Rural Matters



Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Summer 2021



In this issue:



Kent Police



Cleaning up the countryside



Protecting coastal areas



Tackling waste dumping

Plus the latest news on rural and environmental policing in Kent

Welcome to Rural Matters

Welcome to Rural Matters. See inside for the latest on the Kent Police Rural Task Force. There are now more officers countywide dedicated to tackling and preventing crime in the countryside. We've the latest news on how these officers, partners and colleagues are working to protect and support Kent's rural communities. Email your Rural Task Force team – rural.task.force@kent.police.uk

Team Leader



Inspector
Dave Smith
07800 675376

Rural Sergeant



Sergeant
Darren Walshaw
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- PC Paul Williams
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- PC Tom Smith
- PC Nick Lingham
- PC Anna Verrall

East Division – 07980 978202

- PC Dan Perry
- PC Matt Lehman
- PC Harry Callaghan
- PC Michael Sutton

Rural Crime Co-ordinator



Doug Robertson
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More rural contact information, see back page.

Report non-urgent crime online



Go to www.kent.police.uk/report



Report a crime, incident or non-injury collision in minutes



Receive your confirmation email and reference number immediately

To remain anonymous contact Kent Crimestoppers online or call **0800 555 111**.



Twitter account

Your Rural Task Force PCs have a Twitter account
[@kentruralpolice](https://twitter.com/kentruralpolice)

The team regularly Tweets updates on what they've been doing and any live incidents.

Follow for the latest news and information.



Latest news

Rogue trader jailed after £100,000 of unnecessary works

It started with a card through a letterbox offering home improvements and ended up with a retired resident spending more than £100,000 on house repairs he didn't need.

The Rural Task Force supported the Kent Police Economic Crime Unit in the arrest of the rogue trader responsible.

Abey Smith, 50, of Orpington, has now been jailed for four and a half years for committing fraud by false representation – with the case serving as a reminder to home owners to be on their guard against the tactics of those who target the vulnerable, elderly and isolated.

The retired resident had received a card offering improvements at his property in Teynham and agreed to pay Smith £45

to clean his guttering.

Over the next year Smith repeatedly lied about further work needed – charging higher prices for substandard work, like painting roof tiles to give the impression they'd been replaced.

Working under the trading name Roof Seal and Home Improvements, he supplied no estimate, invoice or paperwork. After each 'repair' he'd find more work – falsely saying the victim could claim it back on his insurance.

Smith was sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment at Maidstone Crown Court on 15 June, having previously been found guilty of committing fraud by false representation.

The spending stopped in February 2017 when the victim attempted to withdraw a large amount

of money from his bank, which raised concerns for his welfare and advised him to contact the police.

As part of the investigation an expert witness concluded none of the work was necessary or justified and if it was should not have cost more than £3,300.

Investigating officer Detective Constable Roger Harris said: 'Smith took advantage of the trust placed in him by a man who was entitled to enjoy his retirement after working hard for many years – a concept completely alien to such a dishonest criminal.'

'His actions tarnish the good name of the vast majority of tradespeople who work with honesty and integrity, and carry out repairs to a high standard.'

'This should also serve as a



warning to other householders to be cautious of who you allow to carry out work on your property. Always ensure you are provided with a quote in advance, and always get a second or third opinion if someone calls at your address claiming there is something wrong with your home that they can fix.'

Visitors urged to keep their distance to help birds flourish

Rural Task Force officers have been working with the coastguard and RSPB to raise awareness of the importance of respecting wildlife on the coastline – issuing advice to those using boats and jet skis.

People enjoying Kent's coastline were asked to respect the habitat of marine mammals and endangered birds as visitors to the county's shoreline increased during the summer.

Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Kent has a stunning shoreline along which protected species of birds and marine mammals thrive. We want everyone to enjoy the county's coast

while ensuring the natural habitat of these animals is respected.'

'The most important thing people can do is keep their distance. Seabirds are sensitive to disturbance so if you come into contact with them, move away quietly. Those using boats or jet skis are asked to travel at a no wake speed of under 5mph when near the cliffs and, if you see groups of birds on the sea, slow down and go around them.'

The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 states that it is a criminal offence to kill, injure or take away certain protected wild animals.

Farm Watch WhatsApp

Farm Watch WhatsApp now has over 1,500 members across the county sharing information directly to the Rural Task Force team.

Officers act upon the information received and the results obtained with their help have seen property, such as stolen farm machinery and equipment successfully recovered. Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'We thank everyone for their continued support.'

Anyone from within the rural community wishing to join the group please contact the RTF via the email: rural.task.force@kent.police.uk.

Farm Watch WhatsApp is a tool to share information directly with the team and not to be used to report crime. Any crimes should be reported in the usual way; 999 if a crime is in progress or 101 and online if non-urgent and don't forget the Country Eye App.



Protecting our heritage

Rural Task Force officers have a wide remit across rural crime types. They are fully trained Wildlife Crime Officers and work closely with partners across areas such as heritage and environmental crime.

Patrols alert to military wreck and heritage site thefts

Rural Task Force and local policing patrols have been monitoring the site of a crashed B-17 bomber on the East Kent coast after a man was suspected of removing items from the wreck.

English Heritage had been alerted to the interference – which is an offence under the Protection of Military Remains Act.

Officers have been attending the site at low tide, with local security from a nearby bay estate assisting. Investigators have also released an image of a man, pictured, who may be able to assist their inquiries.

Kent Police had received a report that items were removed from the protected crash site of the B-17 plane between 28 and 29 May.

Excavating equipment is suspected to have been used to remove part of the infrastructure of the aircraft,

During one patrol of the site at low tide WW2 munition was discovered in the bay.

HM Coastguard and Royal Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal were called, with Rural Task Force officers helping maintain the cordon put in place for public safety while it was dealt with.



Protected crash sites

All military aircraft crash sites in the United Kingdom, its territorial waters, or British aircraft in international waters, are controlled sites under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. It is an offence under this act to tamper with, damage, move or unearth any items at such sites, unless the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has issued a licence authorising such activity.

which crashed into the bay in 1943.

Anyone with information should call Kent Police on **01843 222289**, quoting reference **46/92766/21**.

You can also contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or use the anonymous online form at **Crimestoppers-uk.org**



Police volunteer cadets help to restore military sites and keep countryside clean



The care and preservation of historic sites has prompted community spirited action by Kent Police Volunteer Cadets in Dover.

Co-ordinated by Youth Engagement Officer, PCSO Mark Ball, over the last few years the local cadets have developed their very own Heritage Team, thought to be the first of its kind in the country.

They visit sites of historical interest several times a month to hold work parties which involve picking weeds, clearing foundations, litter clearing and moving rocks.

Chief Superintendent Jason Wenlock of Kent Police's Citizens in Policing Team said: 'The cadets have worked incredibly hard to improve these sites so that everyone can enjoy them.'

Cadets also supported the Great British Clean-up campaign in Dover by collecting around 25 bags of rubbish and were out with their litter-pickers covering Dover town centre and the Western Heights area. Email **Cadets@kent.police.uk** for more information about joining the Cadets.

Latest news

Trapped Goldfinches – woman banned from keeping birds

Rural Task Force officers found 10 wild Goldfinches when they executed a warrant under the Wildlife and Countryside Act at a house in Greenhithe.

A woman has now been banned from keeping birds and ordered to pay court costs after an investigation by the RSPCA revealed she had been trapping wild birds.

Officers from Kent Police's Rural Task Force seized the 10 wild Goldfinches on 8 April.

The woman, in her 50s, appeared before magistrates on 25 June where she admitted trapping and unlawfully possessing the birds and an animal welfare offence.

She was banned from keeping birds for six months and issued with a 24-month conditional discharge. She was also ordered to pay £282 costs.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'The trapping, possession and sale of wild birds is not only illegal, it is cruel. Unfortunately, there is a ready market for wild birds but we remain committed to working with the RSPCA and RSPB to support them when they investigate such offences.'

RSPCA Inspector Clive Hopwood said: 'The illegal trapping and trading in wild



One of the ten birds seized

birds has long been a problem. Taking a wild bird from its natural habitat and shutting it in a tiny cage is cruel. Sadly, there is a market for trapped wild finches and

people can make a profit out of this cruel practice. These birds can suffer immeasurably, not only physically but also mentally, and they often die shortly after being captured.'

Wolf skin seized



A wolf skin that had been bought illegally was seized by Rural Task Force officers.

They'd received information from Metropolitan Police colleagues and went to an address in Gillingham. The purchaser was unaware of CITES legislation and dealt with by a Community Resolution.

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Dispersal order to tackle anti-social behaviour at lake

A dispersal order was put in place at a popular lake after reports of anti-social behaviour.

The order grants officers additional powers to disperse any group or person who they suspect has engaged, or is likely to engage in, anti-social behaviour. Failure to comply with a request to leave risks arrest.

The order over a July weekend at Casteridge Lake, Greenhithe, followed numerous reports of nuisance behaviour.



Farm machinery – keep it safe

Theft of machinery and other items from rural locations continues to be reported.

The Rural Task Force are reminding farmers, landowners and rural property owners to regularly review their security

- Ensure sheds/barns are locked and thoroughly secure when not in use.
- Remember to record and mark all property. Serial numbers can be passed to the police if you become a victim of crime.



Op Galileo – tackling hare coursing

Hare coursers damage property and cause financial hardship to farmers and landowners.

As the harvest season gets underway the Rural Task Force are urging people to report suspicious activity around newly open fields and farmland countywide.

Op Galileo is the national focus on the problem and Rural Task Force officers attend both national and regional events to discuss policing an issue which affects all forces with rural areas.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'As well as the damage to land and fences, those who fall victim to this illegal and cruel activity on their land are often faced with threatening behaviour from the perpetrators. Hare coursers who are arrested often have other convictions and those engaged are fully aware they are breaking the law but are intent on continuing these criminal actions.'

The Rural Task Force will be operating

dedicated patrols to tackle the seasonal issue. Sgt Walshaw said: 'It is really important all incidents are reported and recorded with us – which can be done via the Country Eye App, online or by calling 999 or 101 as appropriate or anonymously through Crimestoppers. This is the third year Kent Police continues to work with other forces across the country with the national operation name of Op Galileo. Anyone reporting hare coursing activity should quote this name.'

Officers investigating the crime need details to pursue possible offenders – anyone seeing suspicious activity should record and report the date, time and location of the activity along with a description of any vehicles, people, dogs and where they are heading. The description of the vehicle should include the make, model and colour along with any unique features, as well as the registration number.

Livestock attacks – help preserve DNA

Attacks by dogs on livestock continue to cause distress and financial loss at all times of the year.

The Rural Task Force team is urging dog owners to behave responsibly around livestock – keeping dogs on leads where appropriate during walks and maintaining fences and boundaries where they could escape and cause harm to grazing animals.



The use of DNA testing helps police investigations, with the team able to swab livestock injured or killed in an attack to compare to any suspect dog.

But it is important to be aware of DNA contamination. In a case earlier this summer a farmer in Tenterden had sheep attacked by a dog, with lambs killed.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Unfortunately the deceased lambs had been put in the rear of the vehicle with the informant's sheep dogs therefore contaminating any DNA opportunities.'

Although many incidents are due to careless dog handling in one case investigated by the Rural Task Force three men in their twenties, with two dogs, were reported to be deliberately setting them onto sheep at a farm near Wittersham – attempting to get



the dogs to separate a lamb from the sheep to attack it.

A woman farm worker who went to investigate was abused and as she pulled a dog off a lamb, had stones and sticks thrown at her. One lamb was badly mauled and the victim very upset and badly shaken.

Sgt Walshaw said: 'All incidents where dogs have

attacked livestock are upsetting. In this case it was particularly so, because this was a deliberate attack. We would urge dog owners to behave responsibly and for people to have the confidence to report incidents to us. Our officers will investigate and aspects like DNA testing can help us pursue the offending animals and owners.'

Partnership work – fly tipping

The Rural Task Force works in partnership with local authorities throughout the year looking at those who carry waste.

Officers work closely with councils across the county – enforcing legislation to reduce fly tipping, and those who would profit from illegally carrying or disposing of waste.

In one operation five vans in North Kent were seized after unlicensed scrap and waste collectors were targeted by police patrols working with council enforcement teams. A further driver stopped in Crayford Road, Dartford with containers of used cooking oil had his van taken as it had no tax or insurance. He was also required to present his waste carrier's licence to the council on a later date.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'Drivers involved in carrying and disposing of waste must ensure they have the appropriate licence and documentation as our officers will issue fixed penalty notices on the spot should they discover an offence has been committed.'

'While we regularly visit scrap metal dealers to ensure they are keeping accurate records, our actions are focused on offenders who illegally carry waste material that is often fly tipped in rural areas.'

'I would remind householders and businesses to ensure anyone hired to remove rubbish from their address is licensed to do so. If any fly tipped material is later linked to their property they risk being fined even if



they have paid someone to dispose of it.

'By working with the local council teams we are sending a clear message that waste carriers must act responsibly or face the consequences.'

Throughout the day several other vehicles were checked to ensure drivers carrying and moving waste material were doing so legally and had all the required paperwork.

Dartford Borough Council Leader Jeremy Kite said: 'By clamping down on unlicensed scrap and waste collectors, council officers, together with Kent Police, can help eradicate some of the leading causes of fly tipping in our borough. We were pleased to work with the police to ensure that Dartford does not become a dumping ground for waste. I'd like to thank our officers, along with Kent Police and Gravesham Borough Council, for continuing the fight against fly tippers.'



Loose horses – animals at risk on the roads

Horses will be seized by Kent Police if found straying on the highway with costs payable by owners for their return.

Seized horses are only in Kent Police's possession for 21 days maximum.

Officers try to locate owners and put up posters. When owners come forward they are required to pay a fixed tariff. Any horse unclaimed after 21 days is rehomed.



Protect your dog as thefts continue

Dog theft continues to be reported with pets and puppies targeted nationwide.

There has also been an increase in the purchase of pets which are being sold illegally, many with health and welfare issues.

The National Police Chiefs' Council warned that the cost of a puppy has considerably increased during the pandemic 'making this a lucrative market for organised criminals to exploit.'

A spokesperson said: 'We rely on the public providing us with information and would urge anyone who sees anything suspicious to report it to the police.'

'Dog owners can take reasonable security measures to prevent thefts like checking privacy settings on social media before sharing pictures of your pet online, as this can attract the attention of some criminals.'

'We want to encourage those who are buying dogs to really consider where the pet has come from and ensure that it is being purchased legally. Advice can be found online on what checks you should make before purchasing a new dog or puppy.'

Kent Police has an established team dedicated to education and enforcement in relation to dogs. Officers work with Charity DogLost – which has urged dog owners not leave their dogs unattended in public areas.

Simple steps to protect your pet:

SAFE – Secure your property and garden

SPOTTABLE – Keep them in sight and trained to return

SEARCHABLE – Know what steps to take if they go missing

Partnerships

Rural team working with partners to protect rural communities

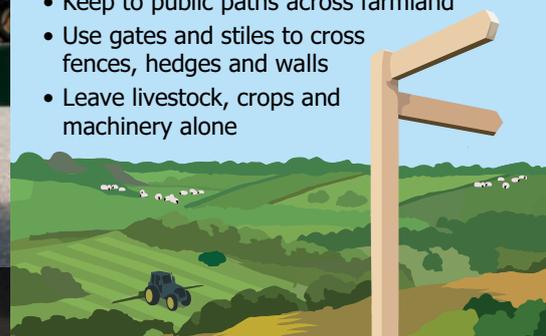


The team use their expertise to support Local Neighbourhood Policing Teams, PCSOs or core response officers. The team are all fully trained Wildlife Crime Officers.

Countryside Code

Remember

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as you found them
- Keep pets under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone



Key partners working with Kent Police to keep rural communities safe

Crime Rural Advisory Group

CRAG formed in 2012, brings together main rural stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union and Country Land & Business Association – representing a large percentage of land occupancy countywide. They bring their own insights to CRAG to help keep Kent Police informed on ever-changing issues in rural Kent.
web: www.btfpartnership.co.uk
email: michael.bax@btfpartnership.co.uk
phone: **Michael Bax 01233 740077**

Kent Association of Local Councils

KALC is a not for profit membership organisation serving member parish and town councils and parish meetings in Kent and Medway. It offers training, advice and services to member councils. KLAC works with rural officers to disseminate information on their behalf, and to gather crime information from towns and parishes.
web: www.kentalc.gov.uk
email: kalc@kentalc.gov.uk
phone: **01304 820173**

National Farmers Union

The NFU champions British farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members. Around 70 per cent of full time farmers are NFU members. They aim to support Kent Police to engage with members' extensive local knowledge,

working in partnership with CRAG and other stake holder organisations.
web: www.nfuonline.com
email: isobel.bretherton@nfu.org.uk
phone: **01730 711950**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service

KFRS is responsible for delivering fire and rescue services to more than 1.7 million people. Each year fire officers deal with around 16,500 incidents including road crashes, house and barn fires and more than 2,400 non-fire rescues. KFRS works with the Kent Police, NFU, and CRAG to provide safety and risk reduction advice to support the agricultural business community.
web: www.kent.fire-uk.org
email: enquiries@kentfire-uk.org
phone: **01622 692121**

Historic England

Historic England is a public body which looks after England's historic environment. There are over 400,000 protected sites and buildings in England and Historic England works across a range of partnership to prevent the loss and damage to our shared cultural heritage. Former Kent police officer Mark Harrison advises the organisation and works closely with rural officers and CRAG.
web: www.historicengland.org.uk
email: southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk
phone: **01483 252020**



Country Land & Business Association

The CLA is the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales and has been safeguarding the interests of landowners, and those with an economic, social and environmental interest in rural land for more than 112 years. The CLA South East Office works closely with the Kent Police to help achieve these aims.
web: www.cla.org.uk
email: southeast@cla.org.uk
phone: **01264 313434**