

Rural Matters



Rural policing in Kent – a magazine for residents and businesses

Spring 2021



In this issue:



**Kent
Police**



Tackling nuisance riders



Horse safety on the road




Catalytic converter thefts targeted

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




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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



Drone used to target nuisance motorcyclists

The Kent Police Rural Task Force regularly works closely with other policing teams and partners to tackle community concerns and anti-social behaviour.

The team recently joined up with Sevenoaks Community Safety Unit and special constables – using a drone to identify and target motorbike riders suspected of committing offences on footpaths, bridleways and nature reserves. They risk having their bikes seized if they ride irresponsibly or dangerously.

Patrols targeted rural areas following complaints from residents that bikes and 4x4 vehicles had been causing a danger to pedestrians and horse riders.



A drone was used to locate suspected offenders in Tinker Pot Lane, West Kingsdown, a quarry at Croydon Road, Westerham and woodland near Farningham.

A total of 10 riders received section 59 warnings from officers and a motorcycle was seized near Farningham as it was uninsured.

District Commander, Chief Inspector Mark Stubberfield said: 'Residents have complained to us about the dangers these vehicles pose to others who use the rights of way and public spaces in

the area. Concerns have also been raised about the impact of noise on the quality of life for local communities.

'Any uninsured vehicle will be seized and a section 59 warning can be issued to riders and motorists driving in an irresponsible manner. This gives us the power to seize and in some cases destroy a vehicle where the anti-social behaviour is repeated.

'A number of riders have travelled from outside the county and we have noted the registration numbers of vehicles used to bring off-road bikes to the area. We will be alert for any signs of reoffending should they be seen to return. Local people have complimented our efforts to prevent anti-social behaviour in the countryside and I would encourage

members of the public to report any further incidents. This allows us to identify where to deploy our patrols effectively.' Rural anti-social behaviour and illegal use of motorbikes, quad bikes and

vehicles has been exacerbated by lockdown around byways, farmland and grazing land and around the Downs. Incidents involving nuisance motorcyclists can be reported on the Kent Police website.

Recent action:

- A joint operation with Medway and Maidstone officers and special constables targeted rural anti-social behaviour and illegal use of motorbikes and quad bikes around the Downs, Rochester, St Peters Village, Lordswood, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham, Bredhurst and Boxley using their own off road capability and supported by the drone.
- The Rural Task Force have been working with officers in Dover in response to complaints about off road bikes and 4x4s causing damage to grazing land around Alkham.
- A Rural Special Constable acted on video of off-road motorcycles recorded riding along a public footpath and over a roundabout at Manston. The riders were identified. On their way to the address officers saw one of the bikes and issued Section 59 and Covid-19 compliance warnings.

Targeting catalytic converter thefts

The Rural Task Force has been supporting a national operation around the theft of catalytic converters.

The week of action, from 19-25 April, follows an increase in metal crime, with a rise in vehicles being targeted nationally.

Full story see **page 5**.



Horses – making motorists more aware

Motorists are being urged to treat horses and riders with consideration and ensure they drive past with care.

The British Horse Society 'Dead Slow' campaign aims to raise awareness of risks around equestrians on the road – which has led to injury and in some cases deaths of horses nationally. Full story see **page 6**.





Rural Task Force action with RSPCA – drugs and dogs seized

Cannabis cultivation was uncovered by officers from the Rural Task Force working in partnership with the RSPCA on a warrant in Rochester. Officers conducted the warrant at a property in High Halstow on 14 April. Three dogs were also seized by the team and two men were arrested. An 18-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the supply of cannabis and animal cruelty offences. A 41-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of cultivating cannabis.

100 anglers spoken to in action against illegal fishing

Illegal anglers were targeted as part of an operation led by Rural Task Force special constables.

They visited Monk Lakes in Marden, near Maidstone, as part of regular activity to ensure those fishing there have the correct licences.

Around 100 anglers were spoken to, with 12 receiving fines from Environment Agency enforcement officers who were also present.

A rod fishing licence is required for anyone fishing for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel with a rod and line in the majority of lakes and rivers in England. Those who cannot show a valid licence when asked are liable for a fine of up to £2,500.

Rural Task Force Inspector Dave Smith said: 'Fishing licences help to sustain and control fish stock levels and to regulate the behaviour of anglers, and we are happy to support our Environment Agency colleagues in targeting those who go fishing without one.'

'The vast majority of anglers are responsible, law-abiding



members of the public who ensure they have the correct paperwork in place before going fishing. The type of people who break the rules are sometimes those who are involved in more serious criminality, and we have arrested illegal anglers in the

past for offences such as burglary, assault and sexual offences.

'We are very grateful for the support from our special constables who give up their own free time to support operations such as these and to help keep Kent safe.'

Special Constabulary

Special Constables are unpaid volunteers who have the same powers as regular police officers. Many have full-time jobs and give up at least 16 hours of their own time every month to help police their local communities. Anyone interested in becoming a special is encouraged to visit the Kent Police website or follow @KentSpecials on Twitter.



Catalytic converter thefts – action against metal thieves

The Rural Task Force is supporting national action against the theft of catalytic converters.

The crime continues to increase across the country, driven by growing metal prices.

Research has shown thefts have risen during lockdown. The week of action against metal crime from 19-25 April was aimed at targeting offenders and raising awareness.

Illegal waste carriers and scrap metal dealers were among those targeted by Rural Task Force officers across the county.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'This was a national operation led by British Transport Police given the increase in this crime across the country. In the week the Rural Task Force working with our partners stopped 104 vehicles of which 18 were seized for various offences. Four arrests were made, three of which were for a theft offence.'

The week included visiting waste metal sites to raise awareness of the issue and to check with their compliance to the legislation and record keeping. Numerous drivers were reported for traffic offences.'

Catalytic converters have been fitted to the exhaust systems of most petrol vehicles built since the early 90s.

According to research, most thefts happen while cars are parked at home, either on the driveway or the road.

Motorists are urged to take extra precautions, parking their vehicle in well-lit residential locations, or ideally a garage, and when away from home, to look for car parks that have security patrols and are covered by CCTV.

Because thieves slide under



the car to get at the catalytic converters, parking against a wall can also help. High clearance vehicles like 4x4s, pick-up trucks and vans are particularly vulnerable to thieves sliding underneath to saw off the converter.

Catalytic converters form part of a car's exhaust system. They contain a honeycomb coated with metals which help filter harmful gases. The RAC said patrols were often called to attend cars that have suddenly become excessively noisy because the catalytic converter has been stolen. Despite being just one

component of a vehicle, their theft can result in costly repairs or a car being written off.

Sergeant Walshaw said: 'Motorists need to be aware of the increase in catalytic converter thefts and we ask them to take steps to protect vehicles. Be vigilant and report anything to us straight away, including anybody seen acting suspiciously around vehicles. We work closely with partners and car park operators and engage with scrap metal dealers to make it easier to trace sellers of stolen metal and identify any dealers who may be operating illegally.'

Protect your vehicle

- Fitting perimeter security fencing can help deter opportunist thieves and slow down more organised thieves
- Good security lighting makes vehicles more visible and can act as a deterrent
- Park in a garage whenever possible
- Consider installing good quality CCTV cameras
- Security-mark and register the metal shell of the converter so it can be returned if stolen and recovered
- Where possible park a vehicle against a kerb, with the catalytic converter being closest to the kerb
- If there are a number of vehicles park low clearance vehicles to block the high-clearance ones to obstruct access
- Fit protective coverings on catalytic converters to make it more difficult to steal (car manufacturers can advise on suitable clamps and security cages)
- Have catalytic converters etched or forensically marked and put stickers in the windscreen to say this has been done

Classic 'Harry Potter' car still missing



A man who stolen a customised classic car from Deal has been jailed for a year and 10 months.

The pale blue Ford Anglia, a replica of the Weasleys' car from the Harry Potter films, was stolen from a Walmer garage by Richard Matthews, 37, in October 2019.

A media appeal and investigation using CCTV images led to his arrest after members of the public came forward with key information. He admitted the burglary when he appeared at Canterbury Crown Court on 26 March. Investigating officer PC Katie Clarke said: 'I wish to thank everyone who came forward with information.'

The car is still missing and anyone with information should contact Kent Police or Crimestoppers **0800 555 111**.

Farm machinery thefts continue – keep it safe

Farm machinery and other items from rural locations continue to be targeted by thieves.

Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'I would like to remind those living in rural areas 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 police if you become a victim of crime.'



Keep contacting Farm Watch WhatsApp

Online messaging system Farm Watch WhatsApp is a countywide scheme for fast time sharing of information between the Rural Task Force and the community.

It has proved successful in recovering stolen property, vehicles and farm machinery and helping police deal with crime as it is reported. If anyone would like to join please email the team. rural.task.force@kent.police.uk



Rural patrol take injured child to hospital

A passing Rural Task Force patrol immediately stopped to help a young child who was knocked unconscious after falling off his push along scooter.

The five-year-old five was resuscitated by a member of the public and the patrol stopped to help.

Learning that an ambulance wasn't immediately available they then took the boy and his dad to Ashford hospital.



'Dead Slow' campaign – take care around horses and riders on roads

An increase in the number of reported incidents involving horses and vehicles nationally has prompted a campaign to raise awareness so motorists know how to drive around equestrians on the road.

The British Horse Society 'Dead Slow' campaign is aimed at educating drivers and riders on behaviour to minimise risk of injury and harm.

Any dangerous or irresponsible driving should be reported to police. The BHS is also encouraging riders and carriage drivers to report road incidents to the society (you don't have to be a member) so it can build a comprehensive picture UK wide to help inform local safety campaigns and identify particular issues.

The BHS collates statistics each year to understand the rate of incidents involving horses and riders on UK roads.

Rural Task Force Inspector Dave Smith said: 'Kent Police have been working in partnership with key stakeholders over many years to help reduce death and

serious injury on our roads. Our close working relationship with the British Horse Society enables us to support and implement road safety campaigns such as 'Dead Slow' in our rural communities where incidents involving horses and vehicles are

reported. Engagement focusing on education and practical advice has proven to reduce incidents of injury and harm. Use of high visibility clothing, 'Dead Slow' signage and helmet cams are all effective in improving road safety when horses are ridden

on roads which are also used by motorists.'

The BHS also runs safety campaigns in schools. The aim of the project is to educate children how to pass horses as a pedestrian, cyclist or a car passenger, offering observations to the driver.



Advice for riders and carriage drivers

- Familiarise yourself with Highway Code rules. Follow guidance on interacting with other road users
- Wear protective headgear to current approved standards
- Avoid riding in failing light, fog or darkness or when it is snowing or icy
- Be aware of surroundings and give clear and decisive signals so other road users are clear of intentions to manoeuvre
- Be alert always. Make eye contact with drivers and thank those who make any effort to accommodate you
- Wear hi-viz and reflective equipment on both yourself and your horse even on bright days (it is surprising how well a horse can be camouflaged against a hedge) a minimum of a tabard or jacket for a rider and leg bands for the horse is recommended
- Let someone know where you are going and what time you expect to be back, so they can raise the alarm should you fail to return within a reasonable time
- Report any incidents of dangerous or irresponsible driving to the BHS and to the police
- Take The British Horse Society Ride Safe Award

Roads campaign focus on safer riding by motorcyclists

An initiative was aimed at engaging with motorcyclists to ensure safer riding – particularly on roads which attract large groups.

The national two-wheel road safety campaign from 12-18 April also involved officers speaking to motorists about driving considerably around vulnerable road users. Officers from Kent Police Roads Safety Unit teamed up with colleagues from Sussex Police and Highways England. They focused on roads attracting large number of motorcycle groups, including the A2070 and A259. The main emphasis was to engage

with motorcyclists to ensure they were riding safely.

The team also performed safety checks on the A21 and Military Road, Rye following reports of anti-social motoring, speeding and dangerous riding. Officers also engaged with other motorists about driving considerably and looking out for vulnerable road users.

Chief Inspector Elena Hall said: 'This partnership effort was not about penalising motorcyclists but about promoting road safety and understanding between different groups of people who use the road network.'



'The vast majority of motorcyclists are enthusiasts who ride safely. However, historically we have received reports of dangerous riding and speeding and we are keen to engage with the motorcycling community, so they are aware of the importance of riding safely. 'All motorists have a responsibility to look out

for vulnerable road users, regardless of what vehicle they travel in. Our message is simple, look twice and think bike – especially at junctions and when manoeuvring your car. Those few seconds you are trying to save could take a life, whereas taking extra caution could prevent someone being put in harm's way.'

Livestock attacks – your pet could be responsible

Livestock worrying continues to be reported, which is particularly distressing for farmers during the lambing season.

All such incidents are investigated by the Rural Task Force, using DNA evidence to support prosecutions where possible. Rural Task Force Sergeant Darren Walshaw said: 'These incidents are very upsetting and dog owners are reminded to keep their dog on a lead when around livestock. In one recent attack at a farm at Molash where one sheep was killed and

four injured, the Rural Task Force contacted both the owner of the sheep and the dog.

The dog owner was genuinely horrified by what had happened and agreed to pay full compensation while agreeing to take measures to control their dog.'

But there are incidents where owners will not take responsibility and Rural Task Force officers will work with farmers to facilitate compensation, issue warnings and take enforcement action in the courts if necessary.



Horses loose on highway – animals at risk

Horses loose on the highway risk being injured or killed. Late last year in Kent a horse had to be put down after being hit by a vehicle.

Rural Task Force Inspector Dave Smith, said: 'Stray horses on the roads are at risk of harm and a danger to motorists. I would urge horse owners to ensure they are kept in a secure environment with fields and stables checked and any gates padlocked.'

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



Horse seizure policy

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.

Four simple steps for drivers

- 1 Slow down to a **max of 15mph**
- 2 **Be patient**, don't sound a horn or rev the engine
- 3 Pass the horse **wide and slow** (if safe to do so) at least a car's width if possible
- 4 **Drive slowly** away

Dog thefts increase – keep animals safe

Thefts of dogs and puppies has increased nationally and owners in Kent are being urged to stay vigilant to keep pets safe.

Recent cases include five cocker spaniel puppies believed to have been taken from their kennel at a property in Denton between 9am and 4pm on 13 April. The two black and three chocolate brown puppies were just five weeks old. The Rural Task Force also investigated an attempted burglary of the same breed near Bossingham.

A neighbour had gas bottles stolen at the same time.

One of two suspects had climbed a high fence to try to access a kennel. A mask and rope left at scene were seized for forensic analysis.

Kent Police has an established team dedicated to education and enforcement in relation to dogs. Part of the team's role is

to help promote initiatives such as microchipping and to work with the charity DogLost to reunite missing or stolen dogs with their owners. The charity has urged dog owners to be vigilant and not leave their dogs unattended in public areas, as well as considering a number of simple steps to help protect their 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

Can you help?

Stolen statues – These heavy bronze statues were the target of a theft using a stolen Land Rover Discovery earlier this year.

The vehicle was later found hidden in woods. Two of the statues were recovered but one is still missing.

Anyone with information about this or other suspected crime can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously by calling **0800 555 111** or using the anonymous online form.

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. KALC 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**