




Issue 32 | January 2023

 @RuralCrimeNfk

# Operation Randall

tackling rural crime  
Newsletter

## Introduction

Welcome to another newsletter. January can be a slightly strange month after a busy Christmas period. Rather unusually, this month hasn't seemed quite as hectic as the previous month, which has been a welcomed relief, although we've been doing plenty and assisting with drone cover across the county.

Earlier this month we invited Dereham Young Farmers to Hethersett Old Hall (the constabulary's training centre) together with a couple of detectives from the Swaffham Hub. We talked to them about the work of rural crime officers, offered some examples of live jobs and of course and our detectives colleagues told them about their work. There were also a few minutes for them to try on some of the uniform and sit in a police car! It was great to see so many young people involved in the rural community, and it was a good evening was had by all. PC Chris Holmes and I also attended Norfolk Local Access Forum at County Hall in Norwich last week and gave a presentation on our work, including how we collaborate with key stakeholders within the rural community. Again, a big thank you to the forum for inviting us.

This month also saw us join forces with the RSPCA to execute two warrants in the Wisbech area and a man aged in his 50s was arrested on suspicion of animal welfare offences. I can't share any more details about this at the moment due to the ongoing investigation, but

I hope it highlights our commitment to working with partner agencies to tackle all forms of rural criminality including animal welfare and wildlife offences.

## Building Site Thefts

This month has seen several thefts from building sites again. Items targeted have included everything from machinery fuel to small handheld tools and mid-size machinery. Of course, these items need to be transported out of the site by some means, so it is highly likely suspects are using vehicles to transport the stolen goods.

We continue to encourage those living near these sites or driving past to be aware of their surroundings, keep an eye out for anything that looks suspicious, and if you see anything, report it to us immediately.

For owners of tools and equipment, where possible, please try to remove items from the site, always store them securely and, if you can, chain smaller items together to make it difficult to remove. Park large machines in well-lit conditions close to roads, and always mark your property with unique details (postcode/business name/number etc).

You can take similar crime prevention measures with your equipment at your home, marking property is a really simple and effective way to make your property undesirable.



NEED TO TALK TO US?

PC Chris Shelley | [christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk](mailto:christopher.shelley@norfolk.police.uk) | 07900 407106

### Hare Coursing—OP Galileo

This past month continues in a similar trend to the rest of the season with the weather playing a key role in recent weeks: frozen ground is not considered a desirable surface to run dogs as there is a high risk of injury.

On the warmer days, when the ground is much softer, we have had a handful of calls in the west Norfolk area. Our request remains the same: if you see hare coursing in progress, and it is safe to do so, please report this immediately to us on 999. Do not put yourself at risk but please provide as much details as possible with descriptions, vehicles involved and exact locations (try to use What3Words) so we can put the right resources in place.

### What3Words

Seeing as I'm referring to What3Words, we encourage you to download and use this innovative technology. It's available to download for free for iPhone and Android users without subscription charges and provides people with a simple and precise way to share their location quickly and easily.

What3words has divided the world into 3m x 3m squares and converted complex GPS coordinates into unique three-word addresses. For example `///exists.roofs.plod` refers to a precise point next to a road on the Norfolk Broads.

The system has been integrated into our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and can pinpoint a caller or incident to a three-metre square of Norfolk. Officers and resources can then be dispatched to the precise location.

### Great Crested Newts (GCN)

It is getting close to the time of year when we start to receive a few reports of incidents/crimes involving Great Crested Newts (GCN) so thought I would use this opportunity to explain some of the legislation that protects them.

GCNs are protected currently by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, GCNs are protected from being intentionally or recklessly disturbed while occupying a structure or place which it is using for shelter or protection. In addition, you cannot obstruct access to any such structure or place. It's also an offence to sell or offer to sell a GCN or any part derived from them including GCN eggs.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations also provide them with the added protection from being deliberately captured, injured, or killed.

We often get reports in Spring of people carrying out pond maintenance in areas where GCNs are present. It is essential that any pond maintenance is carried out in winter months, generally between November and the end of January as this is when GCNs tend to slow down and find log piles, old walls and gaps to curl up in to stay out of the frost. Because of this it's important to be mindful of disturbing such locations around ponds. If you believe you have GCNs in a pond you maintain, it's important to seek expert advice before carrying out any work.

Once you get to Spring, GCNs and other aquatic life start reproducing earlier than a lot of our wildlife and therefore you don't want to harm to them.

If you do carry out any work and find a GCN in a log pile or in the immediate vicinity, stop what you are doing and seek advice.

### WhatsApp Group

The Operation Randall WhatsApp group is expanding. At present the group mainly consists of partner agencies, key landowners and administrators of other social media rural groups. I am currently looking at increasing the size of this group so if you meet one or more of the above criteria – work for a partner agency, key landowner or you administer another rural group on social media - or if you think you would benefit or be able to contribute in any way, I want to hear from you. You can contact me on email at [christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:christopher.shelley@norfolk.pnn.police.uk)

## February in the Countryside

February is the shortest month of the year which, I think, we can all be grateful for traditionally, it can be a very cold month.

On our arable farms, preparation for Spring drilled crops is well underway as the soil is dry enough to work. 'You shouldn't work wet soil as it tends to never dry' is a wise old tale that has been passed down from generation to generation in farming.

Spring cereal crops will soon be planted. Spring cereals tend to have lower yields but the grain they produce is often a 'premium' grain that is ideal for brewing in the case of barley, and spring wheat for cakes and bread. Although sugar beet is still being lifted this month, the majority sugar beet is also planted in the coming months as it needs a huge growing season to secure a large bulb... hopefully full of sugar!

Elsewhere, the land remains very wet for livestock to be out too much, although I have seen some very young lambs on lighter soils in recent weeks, which is always a highlight of the farming calendar. There is also a number of store lambs (last year's lambs) and ewes currently strip grazing stubble turnips. The term 'strip grazing' basically means the farmer opens another 'strip' of fresh food as and when needed otherwise the sheep (or cattle) would just eat the tops and some of the bulb before trampling it all in the ground and wasting it. 'Strip grazing' allows the sheep to eat the whole plant, including the nutritious bulb, without wasting anything. It can often look muddy, but sheep and cattle generally do very well on stubble turnips, and it keeps them out of the sheds for longer as grazing stock is non-existent this time of year.

Avian Flu continues to circulate within our wild bird population and while the number of outbreaks in domesticated flocks seems to have slowed in recent weeks, it continues to pose a very real risk. Poultry owners are still required by law to keep domesticated birds indoors and take extra bio-security steps.

As for our wildlife, things could start to come to life

towards the end of this month depending on our weather and I have already seen some snowdrops popping through. I love seeing the different types of snowdrops that we have scattered around these days. Please remember it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to uproot any wild plant without the landowner's permission, and we often start to receive reports of people suspected of stealing snowdrops. And when buying bulbs, please buy them from a trusted source. We also get similar reports around suspected bluebell theft later in spring, however they are a protected plant and cannot be uprooted, even if you own the land, if they are wild native bluebells.

Many of our reptiles and mammals remain curled up for most of February, however, should we get any consistent period where the night-time temperature is above 5 Celsius some toads and great crested newts can be seen returning to ponds for the breeding season.

While you may not see them, badgers give birth during January and into February which allows the sow (female badger) to raise them in the safety of the sett before taking them out in early Spring when there is an abundance of food. It just shows how clever nature can be.

Some of our early nesting birds are starting to establish their territory – by the end of the month, rooks will start building their nests in scruffy looking twig structures at the top of trees and making a lot of noise. They tend to be one of the earliest nesting species in the UK and tend to have the same partner for life.

## Conclusion

Thank you again for taking the time to read this month's newsletter. As always, please let me know if you have any queries or concerns? If there is anything you feel we should be including on a monthly basis or a one-off mention for a particular topic in a future newsletter, please get in touch.

Chris

## WhatsApp Group

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# Press Appeals

## Appeal following arson at Walsingham Village Hall

Police are appealing for information following a fire at Walsingham Village Hall yesterday (Monday 30 January 2023).

Officers were called to Wells Road at around 4.40pm to assist the fire service. The road was closed shortly before 5pm to allow emergency services to attend to the incident. St Peters Road was also closed.

The incident is being treated as arson.

Officers would like to hear from anyone who may have witnessed the incident or seen suspicious activity in the area at the time.

Anyone with information is asked to contact PC Richard Dawson at Fakenham Police Station on 101, quoting crime number 36/7595/23.

Alternatively contact Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555111.

## Appeal after content of horse box stolen – Thurning

Police are appealing for witnesses after the theft of contents of a horse box in Thurning worth a total of approximately £900.

The incident happened at around 11.30pm on Saturday 14 January on Hindolveston Road in Thurning when the interior of an Ifor Williams HB505 horse trailer was stripped and removed. Contents included four breach bars, a central partition pole, front and rear partition panels, spare wheel, spare wheel cover, and a rear light cover was smashed.

If you have any information, contact PC David Greenwood at Norfolk Constabulary on 101 quoting crime reference 36/4627/23 .

Alternatively, they can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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