

Letter to residents reflecting on rural crime [#595778691]

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Letter to residents reflecting on rural crime

To Wiltshire Residents,

Firstly, I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. The year 2025 brought many challenges and successes, and we at Wiltshire Police are committed to building on these—particularly by working closely with our communities to prevent and solve crime, and to strengthen trust and confidence in policing.

As the County Hub Superintendent and Force lead for rural crime, I am responsible for delivering local policing across both urban and rural communities outside of Swindon. I lead a team of over 400 officers and staff who specialise in response, neighbourhood, and rural policing.

2025 has been a pivotal year for neighbourhood policing in Wiltshire. We have increased our presence across communities, and with problem-solving—alongside partner agencies—at the heart of our approach, we have secured over 25 property closure orders and community criminal behaviour orders (CBOs). These actions have helped protect the most vulnerable and target prolific offenders who persistently reoffend and cause harm to local residents and businesses.

One notable investigation began with the Chippenham neighbourhood team and led to two closure orders at town centre premises. This investigation into modern slavery and human trafficking was later taken on by the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit and uncovered a nationwide operation involving [vulnerable women being exploited under the guise of health and well-being services](#). Success stories like this demonstrate our commitment and help improve public confidence in our service.

You may also have heard about our partnership work to reduce anti-social behaviour and shoplifting in Trowbridge town centre. At the start of last summer, some businesses on Fore Street were considering relocating due to concerns about street drinkers. The local [neighbourhood team worked tirelessly throughout the busy summer period](#) to respond to reports, and we were pleased to hear that local businesses now feel safer on the high street as a result of this work.

Between June and September, 86 arrests were made for 149 offences. Officers continue to hold regular meetings with town centre traders, providing a valuable platform for discussion and enabling businesses to raise concerns directly. This open dialogue has led to an increase in incident reporting, giving us a more accurate picture of the issues and allowing us to focus resources where they are needed most. We are now sharing some of these learnings with other areas of the county.

In November, the first Salisbury Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) was launched. This collaboration between businesses, the police, and the local authority aims to reduce crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour in Salisbury by sharing real-time information, providing training, and fostering stronger community links for a safer environment. It is a business-led initiative focused on practical solutions such as intelligence sharing and training to deter crime affecting shops, workers, and visitors.

Wiltshire is a rural county, and we recognise that rural crime has a lasting impact on victims and places significant financial strain on businesses. Earlier this year, Operation Ragwort—a multi-agency, intelligence-led initiative—was launched to tackle organised rural crime across the South West, including theft of agricultural machinery and plant.

Between September 2024 and August 2025, [hare coursing and poaching offences rose by 21.8%](#). However, we are making progress: since January 2025, 30 individuals have been arrested for these offences—a 500% increase compared to the previous year. We continue to deploy neighbourhood officers, drones, CID, and armed units to disrupt offenders at every stage. This sends a clear message: rural crime is treated with the seriousness it deserves, and we will not tolerate incursions on our countryside. Our efforts are working—engagement has increased, and reports of rural crime are up by 8.9% compared to last year.

We want to continue building on our engagement with local communities and are exploring new ways to strengthen trust and confidence. One idea is to set up a rural crime independent advisory group made up of diverse rural stakeholders such as farmers, landowners, rural residents, businesses, and wildlife groups. It is hoped the group will advise on rural crime priorities such as livestock theft, machinery theft, wildlife crime, fly-tipping, heritage crime, and anti-social behaviour in rural settings, as well as scrutinise Wiltshire Police's performance and identify gaps in our service. We hope to share more information on this in the coming months.

Finally, as we start a new year, I want to recognise the incredible efforts of our staff, officers, and volunteers. Without them, we could not keep Wiltshire safe. We currently have ten watch schemes, including rural-focused initiatives such as Dog, Horse, Farm, Heritage, Canal, and Horse Rider Watch.

We know we cannot police alone. We need the support of residents, community groups, and local businesses to help us identify and solve problems related to crime. Together, we can build positive relationships and mutual trust. If you would like more information on these schemes, please visit our website.

You can report crime online [Report a crime | Wiltshire Police](#) or by calling 101.

In an emergency always call 999.

You can also contact your local policing team through the Your Area section of our website, as well as finding out what is happening in your local area: [Your area | Wiltshire Police](#)

Superintendent James Brain, County Hub Commander

Attachments

[James Brain.jpg](#)

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