

March 2024

## HITTING THIEVES HARD

RET have continued to target plant and vehicle thieves across the county.

The team recovered £80,000 worth of stolen construction equipment from a yard in Brentwood.



Meanwhile, two people were arrested following the search of a property in Uttlesford. Working with the National Construction & Agricultural Theft Team (NCATT) 100 vehicle identification plates, designer jewellery and a large amount of cash was found.

The team have continued to regularly visit Harwich Port.

During the visits multiple lorries are searched for machinery or vehicles leaving the UK. Several items were detained for further examination.



During March five stolen vehicles were recovered across Essex, including this dumper truck.



**Domestic abuse is all about control.  
If you notice that someone seems to  
be controlled in all areas of their life,  
it could be a sign they are being abused.**

**SETDAB.org**

Now there's a quick  
online alternative to  
calling 101 or visiting  
a police station:  
**DIGITAL 101**



Do it online at:  
**essex.police.uk**

**IN AN EMERGENCY  
ALWAYS CALL 999**



## RET IN THE MEDIA

The team have been busy raising rural issues in the media.

PC's Raven and Barber were interviewed twice by the BBC and appeared on the local news and BBC and ITV news apps.

The issue of heritage crime was covered with focus on illegal metal detecting and theft of artifacts and our work with Historic England to tackle it.

### Heritage crime in Essex is a 'big problem', police say

14 March



PC Jed Raven, Essex's heritage and wildlife crime officer, said night-hawking was a big problem in Essex

They were also interviewed about recent incidents of catapulting of wildlife. PC Raven is the national lead for Operation Lake Shot, the police response to these attacks.



Sgt Felton has been working closely with the National Farmers Union to highlight the teams work.

He now writes a regular column for the NFU members magazine 'Countryside'. With a circulation of 90,000 members, as well as being on sale in WH Smiths and supermarkets the column is reaching a very wide audience.

Topics covered so far have included how RET tackles crime in Essex, livestock worrying and fly tipping.

### On the rural beat in Essex

Sergeant Ben Felton explains how Essex Police approach rural crime

**H**OW SERIOUSLY do the police take rural crime? Well, here in Essex, the answer is very. We are lucky to have a Chief Constable and a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner who believe rural communities deserve high-quality policing. But how do we achieve that goal in a county that is 72% rural?

In 2018, a specialist team was set up to lead and advise the force on rural issues. Now known as the Rural Engagement Team, we are in our fifth year of operation. Our team is made up of 10 regular constables, four special constables (who volunteer their policing time for free), two sergeants and an inspector. Working seven days a week, we lead the force in tackling issues including:

- High-value farm thefts
- Hare coursing
- Wildlife and heritage crimes
- Unauthorised encampments
- Rural road safety
- Fly-tipping
- Dog thefts

Our team's job is to understand and tackle rural crime and make those important community links. Engagement very much sits equally alongside enforcement. You can be as effective as you like, but you need to tell people what you're doing in their area to gain their trust and their confidence. And, of course, we need them to tell us what their concerns are, too.

Over the past 12 months, we've attended more than 100 engagement events – from parish council meetings to country shows and village fetes.

We also visit village primary schools to teach the children about the role of a police officer and road safety. We like to get the children involved and conduct speed checks outside their schools. When we stop a speeding motorist, they have the choice of receiving a fixed penalty notice, or explaining to the children why they were speeding. Nothing hits home like being told off by a nine-year-old!

We are very much front-line cops. While out on patrol, we will attend any incident if required. Our 4x4 vehicles are often called upon to rescue motorists from floods or ditches, pull trees off roads, and access off-road areas.

But we are also specialists in our field. As wildlife experts, much of our daily work involves investigating animal crimes such as poaching, hare coursing and livestock worrying. We also carry out high-visibility patrols in isolated areas that don't often see police officers. And we've reintroduced police mountain bikes to patrol our country parks and remote coastal areas – getting to places our patrol vehicles can't.

Summer sees us managing unauthorised encampments. We take a consistent and common-sense approach, speaking to everyone involved and



**By Sergeant Ben Felton**  
Ben is a leading member of the Essex Police Rural Engagement team

balancing the needs of the travelling community with those of local landowners and residents.

Reducing the impact an encampment can have on a community and managing any tension is vital. In Essex, the number of unauthorised encampments has reduced by 75% in the time we've been operating.

In late summer and autumn, we see a rise in theft of agricultural equipment. We recently investigated a spate of thefts of £380,000 of GPS receiver units and equipment from tractors at 13 farms and estates. Initially, we had no suspect vehicle and no clear CCTV of the suspects. But diligent work from our officers identified a suspect, whose phone placed him at the scene of each theft and identified his accomplice. The two men are now serving a total of six years and 10 months in prison.

During the winter, we focus on hare coursing, a cruel and barbaric criminal activity. Incidents of hare coursing across Essex reduced by 50% in the year to 31 March, compared with the previous 12 months. We work closely with the National Police Air Service and with neighbouring forces to spot and track offenders. Earlier this year, we were the first force in the country to get a dog banning order against a convicted hare coursers.

We encourage the reporting of crime because we can only tackle crime effectively if we know where and when it is happening. We use this information to identify trends and repeat locations and target our policing operations. It's a very effective way to disrupt criminals and reduce crime. So, my advice is to report rural crime. We do respond, we do care, and we do catch criminals as a result.

There were 75% fewer unauthorised encampments in the 12 months to 31 August 2023 than there were during the same period in 2017/18.

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Further media work is planned, including making a series of films with the NFU about rural matters.

Follow us on X (Twitter) @EPRural



## SPARROW HAWK SHOT

A sparrow hawk was discovered with a pellet wound in Uttlesford.

The bird was taken to the South Essex Wildlife Hospital but sadly died of its injuries.



RET have investigated several instances of birds of prey being shot or poisoned in Essex over the past few months.

If you have information regarding raptor persecution please email the team at-

[Rural.Engagement.Team@essex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Rural.Engagement.Team@essex.pnn.police.uk)

## FISHING FOCUS

PC Raven lead a joint operation with partners to tackle illegal fishing.



Working with the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust, joint patrols were carried out at Hanningfield Reservoir inspecting rod licences.



## DOG ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with dog owners to prevent theft and encourage responsible ownership has continued.

PC's Baumber and Griffiths ran a dog engagement event in Walton on the Naze.

Free microchip scans were offered and advice leaflets were given out.

Of particular concern are dog attacks on livestock. We have been working with the National Sheep Association to raise awareness.





## LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

RET presented to a variety of local groups and partners in March.

We were pleased to have a stand at the Rayleigh and Rochford Association for Voluntary Service AGM and for the opportunity to explain RET's role to the delegates.



We visited Doddington Parish Council in Brentwood and Gosfield in Colchester.

We also visited the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Conference in Boreham.



## LOOKING AHEAD

Would you like RET to visit your rural event?



The team are booking summer engagement events. We visit parish meetings, country shows, village fetes and community groups.

We can give a 30 minute presentation on RET's role and some of the interesting work we undertake.

The team have a wide range of crime prevention leaflets available, as well as freebies such as Essex Police pens, balloons and badges for younger attendees.

The team are keen to visit rural primary schools. We are able to give a talk about being a police officer and run a safe and engaging speeding check involving staff and pupils.

Please email Sgt Felton at -  
**74973@essex.police.uk**

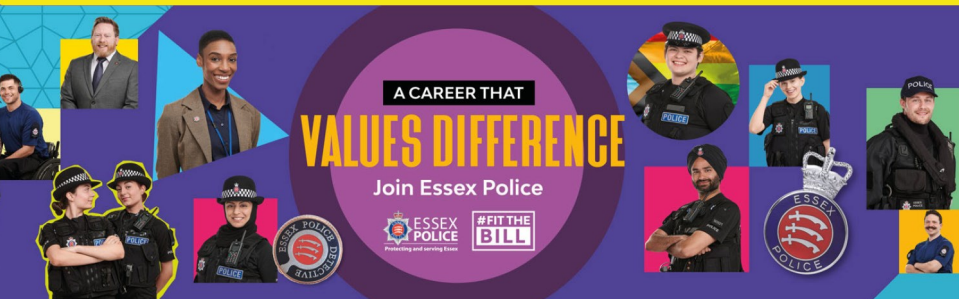


## Digital 101

You can report non-emergency crime by calling **101** or by using **Digital 101**, our quick and easy to use online service that's available at any time.



**Digital 101** is available on the Essex Police website: **essex.police.uk**



If you, or anyone you know, is interested in protecting and serving Essex, you can follow us on social media, or search **#FitTheBill**