

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY MEETING

AGENDA

DATE OF MEETING	4 OCTOBER 2023
TITLE OF MEETING	THE COMMISSIONER'S POLICE & CRIME PLAN 2021-2025 - PRIORITY 4: RURAL CRIME
TIME OF MEETING	11:00 AM
LOCATION	VIRTUAL
CONTACT	OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR DERBYSHIRE 0300 122 6000
DISTRIBUTION	POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER DEPUTY POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER CHIEF CONSTABLE DEPUTY CHIEF CONSTABLE ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLES ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER (RESOURCES) HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES OPCC CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OPCC HEADS OF DEPTS OPCC COMMUNICATIONS OPCC PERFORMANCE & DATA ANALYST

AGENDA ITEM	SUBJECT
1.	INTRODUCTIONS
2.	ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER
3.	ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE
4.	THE COMMISSIONER'S POLICE & CRIME PLAN 2021-2025 - PRIORITY 4: RURAL CRIME REPORT FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE
5.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON RURAL CRIME



Derbyshire
Police and Crime
Commissioner

Protecting Communities,
Fighting Crime



AGENDA ITEM

4

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY MEETING

REPORT TITLE	THE COMMISSIONER'S POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2021-2025 - PRIORITY 4: RURAL CRIME
REPORT BY	CHIEF CONSTABLE
DATE	4 OCTOBER 2023

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide assurance to the Police and Crime Commissioner that the Constabulary are making progress towards the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan Objective 4: Rural Crime.

ATTACHMENTS

1. None

RECOMMENDATIONS

To determine if the Commissioner can gain direct assurance that this area of business is being managed efficiently and effectively.

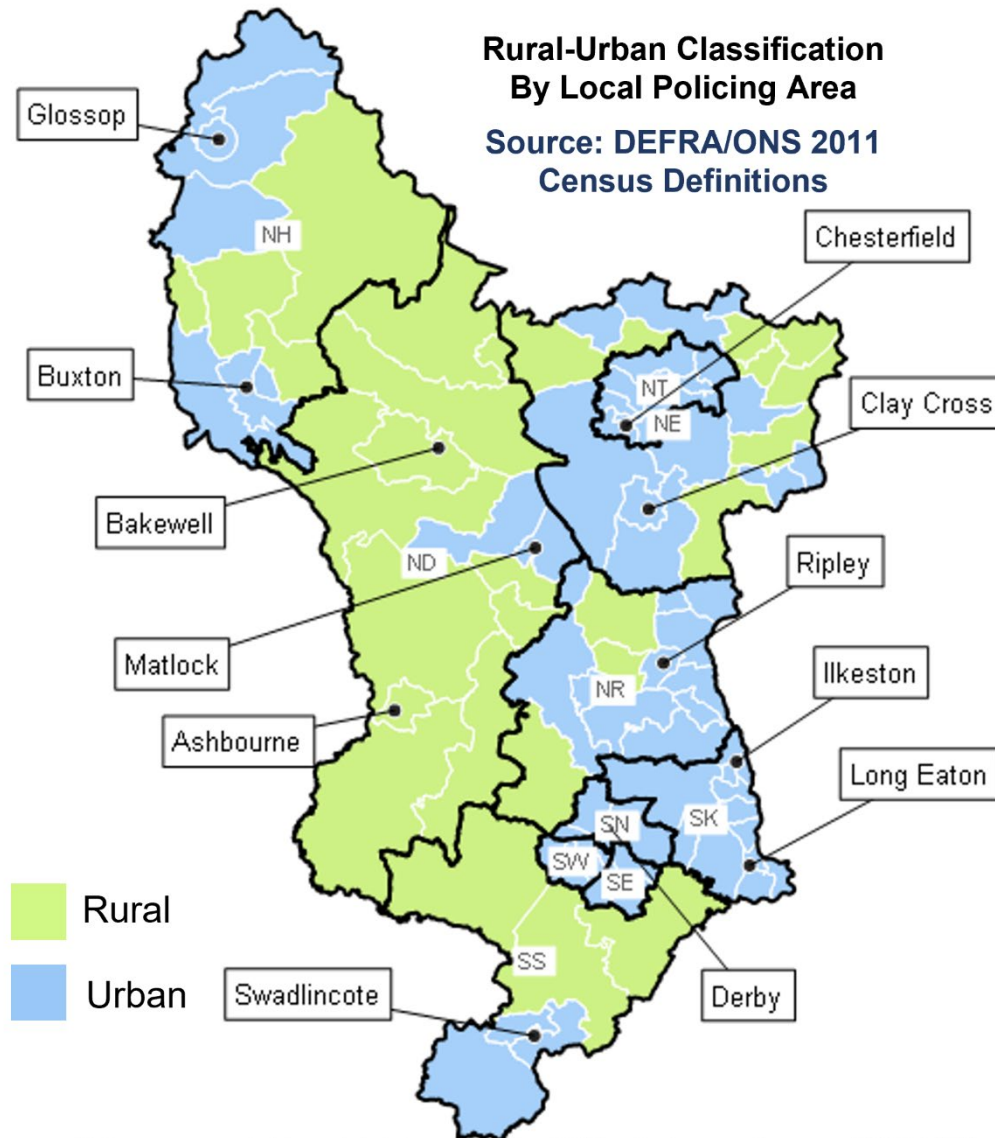
CONTACT FOR ENQUIRIES

Name:	C/Supt Hayley Barnett
Tel:	101
Email	pamenquiries@derbyshire.police.uk

1. **OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

- 1.1 It was previously reported that there was no formal national definition of 'rural crime' and that the force was seeking to establish its own parameters. A key issue for the definition was the subjective nature of the word 'rural'. For a consistent, object and defensible position, the force has adopted the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) definition: Indicator: Rural Urban Classification (RUC2011)
Source: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)/ONS.
- 1.2 The Rural Urban Classification (RUC2011) is an official statistic used to distinguish rural and urban areas for small geographies. Areas are treated as urban in the classification if they are within a built-up area with a population of 10,000 or more, while all remaining areas are classed as rural.
- 1.3 The classification also categorises areas based on context, that is whether the wider surrounding area is sparsely populated or less sparsely populated. As well as settlement form, the wider context of each settlement is determined by looking at dwelling and population densities at greater distances, up to 30 km beyond, to identify sparsely populated areas and thus settlements in a sparse setting. Areas may cover a large area of open countryside and yet still be classified as urban if most of the population lives in an urban settlement an example is the Tintwistle area, which has a large area of open countryside but whose population lives in a built-up area adjacent to Glossop and is close to Manchester. The classification is therefore not necessarily an indication of the amount of open countryside but on the size and context of the settlements where the populations live. Further details on the rural/urban categorisations can be found:
[rucoaleafletmay2015tcm77406351.pdf](#)

1.4 Within Derbyshire, the ONS rural-urban landscape is shown below:



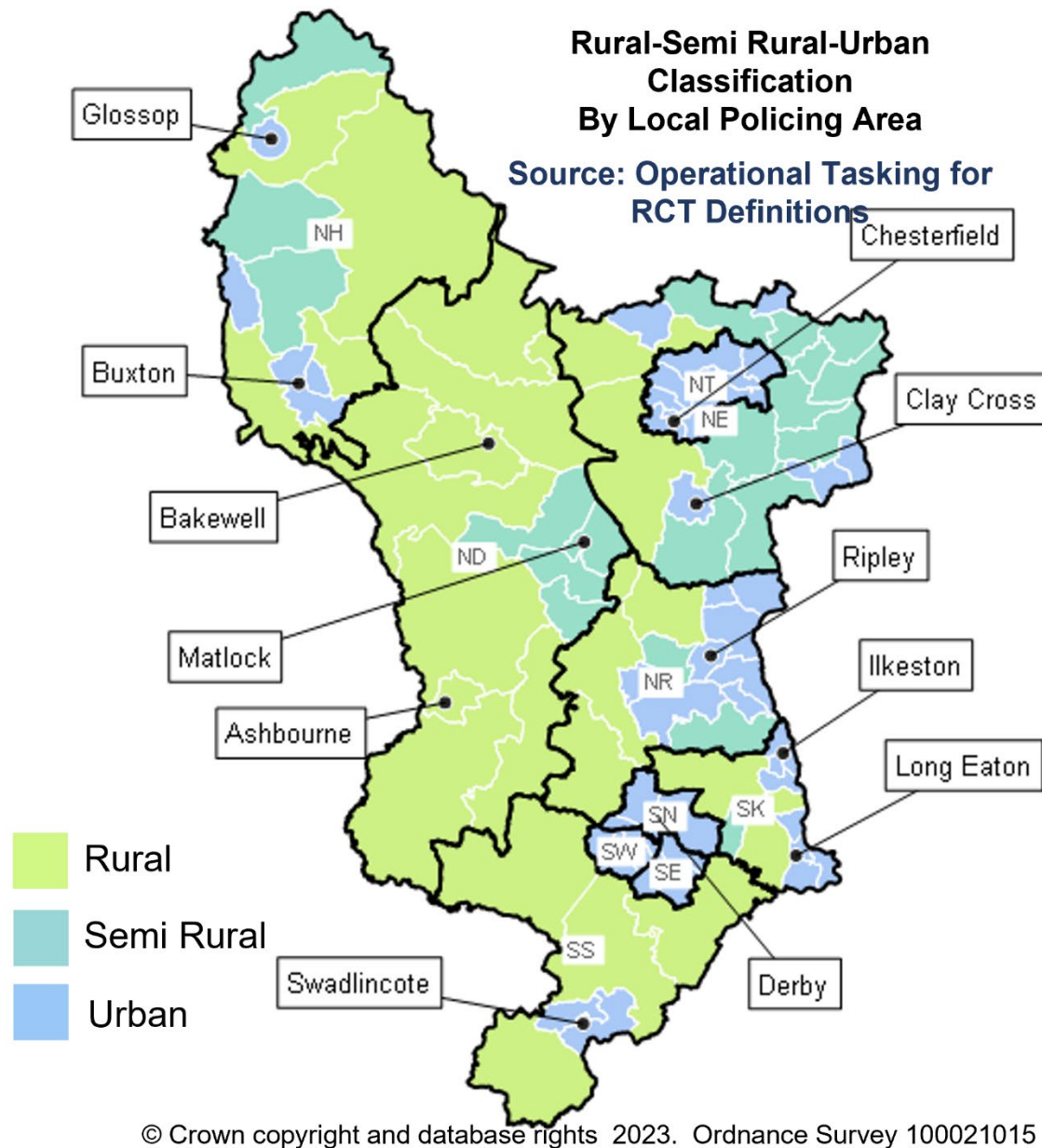
© Crown copyright and database rights 2023. Ordnance Survey 100021015

1.5 A benefit of this definition is that it can be applied to ward level analysis, and therefore to individual Local Policing Areas as used by Derbyshire Constabulary. This is important for future analysis of crime types and trends and fits well with existing police data. The application of the ONS definition to rural crime now allows for analysis of trends and service quality issues affecting rural communities to be better understood. At the time of writing, work is ongoing with the force Performance Team to create bespoke reports that focus on the key priority areas and allow comparison of performance between 'rural' and 'urban' areas. Once

completed this will allow the force to understand how any elements of service differs between the two types of community and consider any action that is necessary as a result.

- 1.6 Whilst working on the definition of 'rural', it was identified that some areas had at least some characteristics of being a rural environment, or a strong sense of community identify as being 'rural' despite being classified as 'urban' by the ONS. For example, SK01 Ilkeston Rural LPA comes out as 'urban', as does NH11 Buxton Rural East.

- 1.7 Therefore to maximise operational delivery to all rural communities, including those that may be on the edge of increasingly urbanised areas, Derbyshire Constabulary has adapted the definition to include 'semi-rural' areas. Whilst this definition is entirely subjective to the force, it includes a wider range of wards in which the new Rural Crime Tasking process operates and is shown below. It is only used for this tasking purpose and not for statistical analysis of rural/urban areas.



- 1.8 The purpose and benefits of this Rural Crime Tasking process is covered later in the report. As well as working with the geographic definition of rural, there are also key thematic priorities relevant to rural crime. These are not bound by any geographic definition and will be priorities dealt with by the Rural Crime Team (RCT) wherever they occur within the force.

1.9 These are: -

- **Agricultural** – Operation Logrey - Agricultural crime covers working farms, farm machinery, farm buildings and smallholdings. Offences include theft of equipment or fuel, damage to property, theft of livestock and livestock worrying.
- **Equine** – Operation Tilly - Equine crime covers working stables and equestrian centres and includes offences like tack theft.
- **Wildlife** – Operation Whistler - Wildlife crime includes hare coursing, poaching, and interfering with protected species.
- **Heritage** – Operation Chronos - Heritage crime is defined as 'any offence which harms the value of England's heritage assets and their settings to this and future generations'. That can include offences like lead theft from churches, damage to ancient monuments and illegal metal detecting.

1.10 These priority areas in Derbyshire have seen the following crime types (Livestock worrying is not recordable and is therefore a non-crime occurrence) recorded in the previous 12 months: -

- There have been 134 records made under Operation Logrey (Occurrences relating to Agriculture).
Theft of Motor Vehicle – 21
Theft from Motor Vehicle/Vehicle Interference – 6
Burglary – Business/community – 22
Burglary – Residential – 16
All Other Theft Offences – 45
Theft of livestock – 9
Theft of fuel – 3
Criminal damage – 6
Livestock Worrying (Now recorded separately under Operation Ranch) – 55

- There have been 21 records made under Operation Tilly (Occurrences relating to Equine).
Theft – 7
Burglary – 6
Criminal Damage – 3
Offence relating to animal welfare – 2
- There have been 97 records made under Operation Whistler (Occurrences relating to Wildlife).
Offences relating to badgers – 11
Offences relating to birds – 37
Offences relating to bats – 3
Trade of endangered species offences – 7
Poaching (fish/deer/hare coursing) – 30
Miscellaneous – 9
- There have been 20 records made under Operation Chronos (Occurrences relating to Heritage).
Criminal Damage – 8
Theft – 6
Burglary – 4
Miscellaneous – 2

1.11 With recent national increases in livestock worrying, several incidents have blighted Derbyshire recently, as well as increases in fuel theft nationally, consideration is being given to separating these crime types out as priorities of their own.

1.12 Fly tipping is also recognised as both an issue locally, and nationally. Derbyshire Constabulary, whilst not the lead agency on this issue, has and will continue to work closely with partners to tackle it.

1.13 In terms of broader crime types and their prevalence and trends in rural areas when compared to urban, they are summarised in the following table:

Crime type	2022/23	2021/22	%Change 2021/22 to 2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	%Change 2019/20 to 2022/23
Rural: All Crime	9,144	9,185	-0.4%	8,559	8,470	8.0%
Force: All Crime	85,966	87,151	-1.4%	76,154	80,517	6.8%
Rural: Burglary Residential	438	416	5.3%	386	531	-17.5%
Force: Burglary Residential	2,688	2,668	0.7%	2,966	3,890	-30.9%
Rural: Burglary Business/ Commercial	156	140	11.4%	149	318	-50.9%
Force: Burglary Business/ Commercial	1,246	1,131	10.2%	1,088	1,813	-31.3%
Rural: Vehicle Crime	758	652	16.3%	585	808	-6.2%
Force: Vehicle Crime	4,847	4,335	11.8%	4,145	5,294	-8.4%
Rural: Violence	2,237	2,286	-2.1%	1,994	1,923	16.3%
Force: Violence	23,046	23,648	-2.5%	19,606	21,048	9.5%

Note: 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 crime trends were affected by COVID restrictions. A potentially better indicator therefore is to compare 2019/2020 to 2022/2023.

1.14 The key points from this data are:

- All crimes committed in rural areas have increased over the last year (2022/23) when compared to 2019/20 by 8%, compared to a 6.8% force-wide increase.
- In the same period residential/commercial burglary and vehicle crime saw significant reductions both in rural areas and the wider force.

- In contrast violence in rural areas increased by 16.3% when compared to a 9.5% rise in the wider force.

1.15 Comparisons between 2021/22 and 2022/23 presents a slightly different picture with:

- A small increase in residential burglaries, but still a level substantially lower than that of 2019/20
- A moderate increase in business / commercial burglaries, but still at levels significantly below 2019/20
- A small decrease in violent crime, but remaining at a level slightly above that seen in 2019/20
- The overall crime level in rural areas has remained largely unchanged between 2021/22 and 2022/23

1.16 There have been no particular procedural/legislative changes of note in the last 12 months or foreseen in the next 12 months.

2. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

2.1 There has been a variety of successful, and high-profile investigations into rural crime in Derbyshire over the last year, a selection of which are as follows:

- In December 2022, a report was received regarding a burglary at a stable yard. A property advertised for sale on Facebook led to a suspect arrested by the RCT. The subsequent search of the suspect's premises led to the recovery of over £3,000 worth of horse tack, since returned to the victim, along with compensation later being paid by the offender.

- February saw an increase in the theft of caravans from both residential and storage units, offending that affected farmers directly as many have diversified through the provision of storage facilities on their land. A suspect was arrested having been identified towing a caravan stolen less than an hour earlier. RCT led the investigation resulting in the suspect being charged with handling stolen goods and is awaiting a court hearing. The caravan, valued at over £20,000, was recovered and returned to the victim.
- In December 2022 youths broke into Bolsover Castle which is a schedule 1 listed historic monument 'of the highest historical value' resulting in damage caused to rare and historic stain glass windows. RCT officers arrested the suspects and after working with experts from Historic England the suspects were convicted at court and ordered to pay £5,000 in compensation.
- In June 2023, the RCT worked with Derbyshire Dales Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) responding to a report of criminal damage at the Agricultural Business Centre. This related to an illegal encampment on the site. RCT officers arrested two suspects who were charged to court with conditions not to enter Derbyshire.
- In May 2023, the RCT received a report from the Derbyshire National Farmers Union (NFU) representative that a car park honesty box had been stolen from a farm. Enquiries lead to the identification of a suspect who was arrested by RCT officers. A search of their premises recovered a stolen e-bike valued at £5,000. The investigation has been passed to South Yorkshire who are dealing with suspect for a variety of offences.
- During evening proactive patrols in early June 2023, an RCT officer stopped a transit van towing a Kabota all-terrain vehicle (ATV). Checks of the ATV found it to have been recently stolen from a farm outside of Derbyshire. The suspect was arrested, and the ATV recovered. This led

to the discovery of a site where 10 separate items of stolen plant and farm machinery were located and subsequently seized. The investigation is still ongoing.

- In November 2022, two suspects were stopped by an RCT officer who witnessed the shooting wildlife. The males were arrested, and their guns seized. During the investigation, the rifle was forensically examined and one of the suspects was subsequently charged with possession of a section 1 firearm.

3. SUB-OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASING THE NUMBER OF STAFF AND OFFICERS TRAINED TO TACKLE THE SPECIFIC ISSUES FACING THE RURAL COMMUNITIES OF DERBYSHIRE

- 3.1 The core RCT establishment currently stands at one full-time Sergeant and seven full-time constables, and the team is currently at full strength. The last 12 months has seen several new officers joining the team and for the first time now has two female officers. All officers are specialist wildlife crime investigators and three are specialist investigators in relation to the control of endangered species. All officers have completed training with Historic England regarding the investigation of Heritage crime. There is also a part-time coordinator and a part-time administrator to support the team. In the last 12 months, the team has recruited the first Rural Crime Team PCSO (RCT PCSO), a role that has greatly enhanced the RCT's ability to engage with communities and stakeholders, undertake problem solving activities and crime prevention, and assist in uniformed patrol functions.
- 3.2 Complimenting the RCT is a new network of dedicated community cohesion single point of contacts (SPOCs) on all SNTs. A specific function of this role is to support engagement with rural communities in recognition of their seldom heard and often isolated nature. These SPOCs prioritise engagement with rural communities, provide a visible presence, attend meetings and community events, identify key

contacts, forums, and methods to deliver key police messages and crime prevention advice. They also support the wider SNT and RCT in responding to rural crimes and problem-solving repeat issues affecting rural communities.

- 3.3 Whilst the RCT focuses on the key priorities of agricultural, wildlife, equine, and heritage crime across the force area, it does not function alone in policing the rural communities of Derbyshire. All areas are covered by dedicated SNTs and supported by a response function. All the investigative and operational support departments in the force can and do deploy wherever they are needed, including in rural communities.
- 3.4 There are also 18 other officers in the force who have undergone the Wildlife Crime Officer National Training Course, provided by the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU). They function as points of contact on a variety of front-line response, Safer Neighbourhood Teams, CID, and Operations Division and are available to respond to any reports of wildlife crime should the RCT not be available in the first instance. Unfortunately, this training is currently under review by the NWCU, but once it becomes available again the force will seek to utilise it to maintain capability in this area.
- 3.5 With increased officers becoming available through the police uplift programme's recruitment, the force has been working to fill vacant Police Officer roles across SNTs, as well as its Local Policing Unit (LPU) 'response' function benefiting neighbourhood policing across the county, including rural areas. Whilst natural turnover is inevitable it causes some periodic vacancies on some SNTs, the force has recently undertaken a selection process to ensure a pool of readily available officers is in place to fill those vacancies as they come up. A more significant issue for the force is working to rectify the number of currently vacant PCSO posts around the force, with a view to meeting establishment in September. A new PCSO course commenced in July 2023, with others scheduled for September and then January 2024.

- 3.6 An officer from RCT has also been successful in applying for a two-year secondment to the National Wildlife Crime Unit due to start imminently. This opportunity will provide excellent links into this specialist national team further enhancing the capability of the RTC in this area. The secondment will not lead to an abstraction locally as it has been backfilled by another officer, so the RCT in Derbyshire will remain at full strength.
- 3.7 In addition to the 18 WCOs, the Rural Crime SPOCs now comprise 17 officers across six LPUs containing rural or semi-rural areas. They have been specifically selected for the role and have begun to undertake specific training put together by the RCT to upskill them in rural affairs. The first training event for these officers was opened by the Police and Crime Commissioner on the 18th May 2023. The training gives officers working in rural areas the knowledge they need to help support the RCT with their priorities of agriculture, wildlife, heritage, and equine crime. It also included an input from the Derbyshire NFU, who gave an overview of farming in Derbyshire and talked about how crime affects the agricultural sector. Rural Action Derbyshire gave an input highlighting Rural Vulnerability which included a showing of their award-winning film 'The Willows - Dawn's Story'. There was also training from a plant and agricultural vehicle theft expert who delivered an input about tackling rural crime and plant vehicle identification. Further continuous professional development training sessions are planned.
- 3.8 These Rural Crime SPOCs also support the new Rural Crime Tasking Process and attend monthly meetings in which all policing issues affecting rural communities are discussed and tasked out for action.
- 3.9 The Rural Crime Tasking process is a new mechanism chaired by the Superintendent for Rural Crime or the Deputy Rural Crime Lead for Derbyshire Constabulary and attended by representatives from the RCT, the Rural Crime SPOCs and Force Intelligence. The meeting reviews all rural priorities, regional information sharing, and policing issues across the rural and semi-rural geographic areas. Crime trends, ASB, persons of interest etc are all discussed and clear action

directed to address them, along with opportunities regarding crime prevention and engagement. This allows for greater awareness of wider issues affecting rural areas in the force, closer working relationships between local policing and the specialist RCT and brigading of resources to tackle larger issues or support initiatives.

- 3.10 Further improving operational delivery of the RCT, a new shift pattern was implemented towards the end of 2022. This pattern saw extended coverage into the evening and early morning, along with seven days a week coverage. This has significantly improved operational delivery, both in terms of patrol function, and opportunities to engage with communities.

4. SUB-OBJECTIVE 2: COMMISSIONING SERVICES THAT UNDERSTAND AND CAN RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THOSE LIVING IN A RURAL SETTING

- 4.1 Derbyshire has a large rural area with farming and land management activity across the whole county with some identified 4,800 farms. There are also numerous privately owned upland and lowland estate areas as well as large areas of land managed by statutory partners, private companies and charities, examples being the National Trust, United Utilities, and the RSPB to name a few. The RCT regularly engage with a wide array of partners through the various forums hosted by the Peak District National Park Authority as well as through other channels as required or dictated by emerging incidents or trends.
- 4.2 In terms of engagement with farmers and landowners the RCT undertakes farm visits which are aimed at providing visibility and reassurance as well as crime prevention advice where necessary. They are regular visitors to the local farmers market where engagement takes place with other rural partners such as the NFU as well as being available and visible to local farmers.
- 4.3 Weekly monitoring of situation reports from the Peak Park Ranger Service are received and advice and support is provided when required.

- 4.4 The force is also aware of current national rural crime trends, with officers having attended the recent NFU Rural Crime Report webinar detailing this year's findings and we continue to enjoy excellent local relationships with NFU representatives who are able to regularly update and add a local context to Derbyshire.
- 4.5 The team have regular local engagement events at shows, markets, and other central community locations where they provide specialist crime prevention advice, supported by the team's coordinators and volunteers. One such event is the Chatsworth Country Fair where we will be supported by the force Firearms Licensing department and the Willow Project.
- 4.6 The team have an excellent relationship supporting the Willow Project which is a Police and Crime Commissioner funded project within Rural Action Derbyshire and who provide training and awareness throughout Derbyshire. The training helps people identify signs of domestic abuse and gives confidence to people to report it. They recognise that domestic abuse faced by victims who live in rural locations can be quite different to those living in busy towns or cities. The RCT are committed to enforcing this message and work with the Willow Project to raise the awareness of domestic abuse in rural communities to Derbyshire officers and staff. The Willow Project join the RCT at various engagement events and have delivered training to Derbyshire officers at the Rural Crime Awareness training day.
- 4.7 The RCT work closely with other regional forces and their RCTs to share good practice and intelligence. Weekly intelligence sharing meetings take place with rural crime specialists from police forces throughout the region and this has led to several proactive operations targeting cross border criminality, as well as a joint operation with neighbouring forces into the handling of stolen farm equipment and plant.
- 4.8 All areas of Derbyshire are covered by SNTs with their own programmes of engagement in line with their relevant neighbourhood profiles. By also working towards sub-objective 6, improving communication and engagement, the force can build a rich picture of the specific needs of the communities it serves.

4.9 The analytical work detailed previously will also provide an understanding of police demand and service delivery in rural areas, a level of detail not previously available. It is anticipated that future analysis of this information will provide further insight into issues affecting rural communities and thereby provide evidence on which to base future commissioning of services.

5. SUB-OBJECTIVE 3: COMMISSIONING CRIME PREVENTION ACTIVITIES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES TO REDUCE CRIME, TRESPASS AND THEFT

5.1 The RCT PCSO is currently overseeing a Problem Management Plan (PMP) to tackle livestock worrying in Derbyshire. A public meeting with farmers was held earlier this year and efforts have been ongoing to raise the profile of the problem and encourage members of the public to walk their dogs safely and responsibly. The RCT have adopted a strong social media campaign to highlight the issue as well as investment in signage which is provided free of charge to affected farmers. Various engagement events have been held in hot spot areas to reduce instances of livestock worrying. This is alongside a robust approach to offenders when incidents do occur. The plan remains open until after current lambing season when the situation will be assessed, and a further public meeting held to gauge the impact of efforts made on the community.

5.2 In terms of enforcement by the RCT for this type of offence:

- 10 suspects have dealt with by way of restorative justice, which includes compensation to victims and Dog Control Orders
- 1 suspect charged to court after their dog got loose and chased a horse through the streets. This resulted in the horse damaging a parked vehicle and being euthanised because of its injuries. Case still ongoing at court
- 1 suspect from Chesterfield who had previously been issued with a Dog Control Order but had again allowed their dogs to get loose and chase a farmers sheep causing injury to one of them. They were charged and

convicted at court. The suspect was fined and ordered to pay compensation to the victim.

- 5.3 In response to an increase in acquisitive crime of agricultural equipment (Operation Logray) over the previous winter (2021-2022), the RCT implemented a PMP to help address the issue. Crime patterns and trends were identified, and the policing response adjusted accordingly in terms of patrol strategies. Crime prevention initiatives were also put in place, including implementation of marking of vulnerable property, and education to the owners of the importance of securing property and belongings.
- 5.4 The PMP was reviewed in February 2023 and acquisitive crime against farms over saw a significant decrease of 32.5% from the same period in 2021/2022. This reduction mirrored the feedback from farmers at recent event at the Bakewell Farmers Market where they gave positive feedback regarding their perceived reduction of acquisitive crime from farms, particularly the theft of quad bikes. However, continuous crime monitoring highlighted an increase in this type of offending again in June 2023 in the Hope Valley area. As a result of learning from the earlier PMP, the RCT and local officers were able to respond effectively. Crime prevention and proactive patrols were conducted in the area which led to the arrest of a suspect in possession of a stolen Kabota ATV, which was subsequently publicised as part of the prevention activities on social media. The number of thefts reduced quickly and significantly following this arrest, but the situation continues to be monitored.
- 5.5 The RCT PCSO has also implemented a horse tack marking scheme that has proven very popular with horse owners throughout the county. The RCT PCSO has attended numerous equestrian events, and visited over 30 stable yards, equestrian centres and individual owners, security marking over 500 valuable items of horse tack including saddles, harnesses, and rugs. The scheme is set to continue.

- 5.6 The RCT have expanded an initiative with Datatag Security (www.datatag.co.uk) that offers a reduced cost for the security marking of agricultural plant and equipment. Organised by the RCT, North East, Bolsover and South Derbyshire local District Councils have provided funding for the initiative that has also seen the significant contribution of £15,000 from the Police and Crime Commissioner. This initiative will allow the RCT to support farmers who have been the victim of crime with free security marking as well as offering the service at a reduced cost for all Derbyshire farmers.
- 5.7 The RCT have provided several signs and vehicle stickers that are distributed to farmers and members of rural communities. These include the 'Dogs on Leads' signs to tackle livestock worrying, the wrap around crime prevention labels that the team will place on vulnerable equipment to encourage farmers to secure their property and the 'Stop this Vehicle' stickers that encourage officers to stop and check agriculture vehicles, tractors, and trailers. The RCT have also produced and distributed leaflets and fliers that promote crime prevention and the work of the Rural Crime Team.
- 5.8 In March 2022, Derbyshire Constabulary signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Peak District National Park Authority (PNDPA). This MOU was driven by the Peak Park Summit, chaired by the Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer of the Peak District National Park Authority. This agreement sees both organisations, along with Community Safety Partnerships, come together to work on coordinated efforts to tackle rural and wildlife crime. The agreement recognises the distinct roles and responsibilities of the two bodies but also identifies how collaborative working can benefit both local communities and visitors to the area. There are regular meetings involving both organisations, along with other community partners, to share information, provide updates on ongoing work and identify emerging issues. The RCT and local safer neighbourhood officers work closely with Rangers and staff within the National Park Authority to ensure that joined up working is taking place and the Peak District National Park remains a popular and safe place to live and visit.

5.9 The recently passed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a new offence, and strengthened some existing powers, relating to trespass. At the time of this report, the force has used these powers infrequently and in urban areas not relevant to this report (three times in Derby East). The threshold for these powers is set high, and it is not anticipated that they will be used frequently, however, they have proved useful additions to the legislative framework which can be called upon to deal with such incidents. Primacy in most incidents of trespass (where residence without permission is the intention) rests with the landowner or Local Authority, and this has not changed with the new legislation. The force will continue to work with the relevant partners, and the Commissioner's Illegal Encampment Taskforce where such cases arise where and it will provide the appropriate level of support required in each case. The Taskforce joint working has been particularly effective in North East Derbyshire more recently.

6. SUB-OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER SCHEMES SUCH AS NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND FARM WATCH

6.1 A key priority for the RCT is promoting Farm Watch via Derbyshire Alert. Working with NFU and other partners as well as local contacts, farmers have been encouraged to join WhatsApp groups through which their members are able to share information and intelligence between one another which can then be passed to the police as part of Farm Watch. This practice has been embedded with farmers in the North of the county for some time and is being introduced more widely in the South following a recent event organised by a South Derbyshire Councillor. This event saw rural partners and farmers meet with the RCT and LPU Inspector for South Derbyshire to discuss rural policing in their area. One result of this was that local NFU representatives have begun to set up a number of these groups in their areas to support Farm Watch.

6.2 To further promote the use of Farm Watch and its value to the community, it has been a key focus of the RCT PCSO. As a result, subscription to the Derbyshire

Alert Farm Watch group has shown a significant increase and now has more than 2,800 users.

6.3 A similar group on Derbyshire Alert which covers Horse Watch has over 1,200 users and is used to pass relevant crime prevention methods, updates and appeals.

6.4 Speeding vehicles in rural areas are a constant source of concern, and the force has invested in supporting the setting up of Community Speed Watches in many areas. The following table illustrates how many are active in Rural and Semi-rural wards around the force as of April 2023. Data from previous years is not held in a readily comparable format and hence is not shown.

No of Speed watches in:	North East	Amber Valley	Derbyshire Dales	High Peak	South Derbyshire	Erewash
Rural (ONS def)	7	6	12	3	7	0
Rural/Semi Rural (Derbyshire Def)	13	11	16	7	12	7

6.5 The Constabulary is also invested in supporting the promotion of Neighbourhood Watches for which it has seen a small increase in the number of watches in rural and semi-rural areas in the last 12 months:

	Nov-22			Jul-23		
	Number of watches	Number of co-ordinators	Number of members	Number of watches	Number of co-ordinators	Number of members
Rural (ONS def)	238	190	854	255	194	1020
Rural/Semi Rural (Derbyshire def)	435	350	1391	460	354	1643

7. SUB-OBJECTIVE 5: DOING EFFECTIVE, TARGETED WORK WITH PARTNERS TO PROTECT THE UNIQUE AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE OF THE COUNTY

7.1 The current Wildlife Crime priorities set by the National Wildlife Crime Unit are as follows:

- Bird of prey crime
- Badger crime
- Bat crime
- Poaching
- Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- Cyber enabled wildlife crime
- Freshwater pearl mussels

7.2 Derbyshire is not identified as a national hot spot for any of these crimes; however, it does suffer from all of them to some degree, except for issues surrounding freshwater pearl mussels.

7.3 The Peak District National Park and Derbyshire generally is home to various species of birds of prey, particularly peregrine falcons who find homes in both rural and urban environments. Previously, peregrine falcon nesting sites have been targeted by thieves and nests have failed when there appears to be no natural explanation as to why. The RCT have worked hard to improve communication with various monitoring groups and build effective working relationships with local experts to ensure that these nest failures are reduced and any suspicious activity at the sites is investigated swiftly and robustly. A PMP is in place to improve the communication with groups and persons responsible for the monitoring of bird of prey nesting sites. The RCT has a good relationship with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and work with them closely to investigate any reports of bird of prey persecution. It is recognised that these groups have felt unsupported by police in the past, but positive engagement with these groups has allowed the RCT to demonstrate that we are keen to see birds of prey thrive in

Derbyshire. By enabling regular and direct contact between the groups and members of the team we were able to ensure that any suspicious activity around nesting sites was responded to promptly and effectively. The nesting period is drawing to an end, but early assessment suggests that the initiative has had a positive impact, with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust reporting that a prominent nesting site which rarely produced peregrine chicks has this year been successful and three chicks have fledged.

- 7.4 Poaching is an issue throughout Derbyshire with the most prevalent being fish poaching as well as the illegal trapping of cray fish. The RCT are working hard to improve our response to fish poaching, particularly on the River Wye and have agreed a plan of action with river keepers and the Environment Agency to reduce calls for service and effectively deal with any offences when they are reported. Lincolnshire suffer a great deal with hare coursing and have recently had a number of high-profile convictions. This could see the problem being pushed into other counties such as Derbyshire, but the RCT regularly share intelligence and information with local forces, including Lincolnshire, and are prepared to respond should Derbyshire see an increase in hare coursing.
- 7.5 As part of the national operation, Operation Thunder which ran throughout October 2022, was a Derbyshire RCT led initiative to highlight the trade of endangered species and ivory through auctions and antique centres. During this initiative, RCT officers visited various sales outlets and seized various items and specimens that were being offered for sale without the appropriate documentation. Nine suspects were identified and dealt with by way of restorative justice, with seized items submitted for destruction and agreement to remove any similar items from sale. The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) offences are not commonly reported so the initiative was effective in raising awareness of the issue and educating the people that manage the sales outlets.
- 7.6 Badger crime comes in many different forms from developments that cause habitat destruction to offenders baiting and killing badgers with dogs for 'sport'. The RCT works closely with the North, Midlands and South Derbyshire badger groups and

meet quarterly to discuss current trends and give updates on any ongoing investigations. The RCT are due to give their members training around evidence gathering should they discover potential badger crimes. Most of the reports which are received regard habitat disturbance and these reports are always thoroughly investigated.

- 7.7 The Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative was a partnership group consisting of representatives from Police, PDNPA, National Trust, Moorlands Association, National Gamekeepers Organisation, Natural England, local volunteer raptor monitoring groups and formerly the RSPB. It was formed to tackle conservation concerns relating to population declines and breeding failures of a number of key birds of prey species within the Dark Peak area of the national park. Unfortunately, this group recently disbanded. However, the RCT have pledged to maintain contact with the various partners from the former group and have specifically had dialogue with the Peak District National Park Authority, The North Peak Raptor Monitoring Group, and the RSPB. The RCT will continue to work on a needs or intelligence led basis with all the partners until such time as any new formal partnership group emerges.
- 7.8 In April 2023 the RSPB approached the RCT with CCTV from a quarry in the North of the county that showed a male roping down and stealing peregrine falcon eggs from a nest on the quarry face. Acting on recent intelligence the RCT, along with representatives from the RSPB, NWCU and the Animal and Plant Health Agency conducted search warrants on two addresses in Derbyshire. As a result, a male was arrested on suspicion of nest disturbance and theft of schedule 1 birds eggs for which the investigation is ongoing. Without close and effective relationships with partners, investigations such as these often fail, and this positive outcome demonstrates that the RCT are working tirelessly to ensure these relationships are maintained and wildlife crime remains a high priority.
- 7.9 The RCT have a PMP in place to ensure an effective response to fish poaching on the River Derwent, which last year was identified as an issue affecting the whole community, particularly at Bakewell. Earlier this year the RCT, Derbyshire Dales

SNT, representatives from the Environment Agency and river keepers attended a public meeting and agreed a joint response to tackle the problem. The river keepers have ensured target hardening on the worst hit locations and the RCT conducted proactive patrols of hotspot areas which resulted in several people caught and dealt with for fish poaching. This includes a recent incident reported by a river bailiff on the River Derwent. The RCT responded and caught a male poaching crayfish with illegal traps. Not only is this illegal but it hinders the ongoing efforts to control alien species of crayfish in our rivers. The traps also pose a significant risk to wildlife. The traps were seized and an evidence package was handed to the Environment Agency who will lead the prosecution. The PMP will remain in place throughout the summer period after which a further public meeting will be held to assess the response.

- 7.10 In March 2023 the RCT dealt with two separate reports of bat roost disturbance. The first was regarding a developer failing to comply with their licence and the latest report referred to the destruction of a roost without any prior site assessment. The reports were investigated, and offences were found to have been committed. Both developers were dealt with out of court, for which the resolution included a significant contribution to local bat conservation groups as well as taking steps to rectify the damage already done.
- 7.11 As previously mentioned in this report, a Derbyshire officer and member of the RCT is due to start a 2-year secondment with the National Wildlife Crime Unit in August 2023. This will strengthen the linkages with this team and lead to improved capability and capacity in the county with respect to investigating offences relating to wildlife.

8. SUB-OBJECTIVE 6: IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT, USING A WIDE VARIETY OF METHODS, WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES

- 8.1 The RCT continue to maintain a presence at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell every Monday for the livestock sales. This is an invaluable opportunity to communicate with farmers directly and helps us better understand the issues affecting them. The RCT are supported at the market by the volunteers who regularly attend to promote Farm Watch on Derbyshire Alert.
- 8.2 At a recent event in Hilton hosted by the Commissioner, concerns were raised that engagement with rural communities in the South of the county is not as effective as it is in the North, as many larger events used for engagement occur in the North. To address this, new opportunities in the South of the county have been identified such as several drop-in sessions and street meet style events now being held at Bayley's County Store. These were advertised on social media and provided a good opportunity for farmers and residents to communicate with the team. It was recognised that farmers from South Derbyshire will regularly attend farm sales held just outside the county in Staffordshire and in response the RCT PCSO and a RCT constable have attended two such events recently. They again proved to be a good opportunity for engagement and are set to continue.
- 8.3 The RCT PCSO is focusing on engagement with farmers who have been the victim of crimes, with follow up visits, including for those crimes where limited lines of enquiry may ordinarily mean an investigation is quickly concluded. This provides an opportunity for engagement and intelligence gathering and helps to improve relationships with the farming community.
- 8.4 The RCT has an active social media presence, with the Facebook page currently having over 19,000 followers (a 5% increase over the last 12 months) with the top post reaching over 200,000 people. Similarly, the RCT Twitter account has almost 3,000 followers with the top Tweet receiving almost 15,000 impressions. This creates numerous opportunities for contact and communication with rural communities and helps build familiarity and trust, key factors in increasing

confidence in reporting. This is alongside the engagement events and mechanisms also employed by the SNTs who also police the rural communities.

- 8.5 Since the previous report, the RCT have acknowledged that some farmers and rural residents do not all have easy access to or regularly use social media. In response to this the RCT have introduced a quarterly newsletter that provides the public with updates on ongoing rural crime investigations and initiatives as well as crime prevention advice. The newsletter is circulated not only electronically on the Derbyshire Constabulary website and social media pages, but also in a more traditional hard copy format that can be distributed directly to farmers and at prominent rural locations.
- 8.6 The Rural Crime Team continue to attend all major rural events throughout the county engaging with community contacts and members of the public to identify current issues, raise public awareness and promote crime prevention. This year the team have had a stall at the Derbyshire County Show, Chatsworth Horse Trials, 'Let's Learn Moor' event in the Peak District amongst others, and will be attending the Ashbourne Show, Ashover Show, Chatsworth Country Fair and the Brailsford Ploughing Match as well as several other events. Attendance at these events is often in conjunction with officers from the local SNT.
- 8.7 The rollout of the Rural Crime SPOCs has dramatically improved the information sharing between local officers who regularly police rural communities and the RCT. The closer working relationships with local officers has not only improved the force's response to rural crime, but also opened more opportunities for joint engagement operations. The RCT PCSO has already joined Swadlincote, North East, Derbyshire Dales, and Ashbourne SNT officers at a number of their engagement events. This helps raise the profile of the team and ensure all issues that affect rural communities are catered for. The RCT PCSO is also involved in a pilot engagement project being led by North East Derbyshire SNT to visit all farmers on their policing area.

- 8.8 To improve community engagement, training has been delivered to all the new Community Cohesion PCSOs throughout Derbyshire that will help them identify the seldom heard communities within their policing area. The training also provided practical advice to help them identify the police related issues affecting their areas and how they can proactively reach out to key community contacts within these settings, particularly in respect of community tensions or critical incidents. It is recognised that individuals, families, and groups within remote communities can often feel vulnerable and find it harder to access the support they require and so this forms part of the training.
- 8.9 All the SNTs have expectations for community engagement set out within the ‘SNT minimum standards for community engagement’ policy. These standards ensure all communities, including those in rural areas, have their voices heard and their needs met. Derbyshire’s commitment to the Neighbourhood Policing Charter produced as part of the force’s strategy to deliver strong local policing across the City and the County, is also in line with the Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan and underscores this subobjective.
- 8.10 This year’s Rural Crime Awareness Week ran from 18th to 24th September and saw a series of operations led by the RCT supported by local officers, running alongside a range of engagement events promoting the work of the force in rural areas, engaging with communities and partners, as well as direct targeting of the criminality affecting them.

9. SUB-OBJECTIVE 7: IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP WORK WITH PARISH COUNCILS AND LOCAL CHAMPIONS

- 9.1 The RCT work closely with local SNTs to tackle ongoing issues and problems that fall under the more general heading of ‘rural crime’. All SNTs work closely with Town and Parish Councils and attend meetings throughout rural communities where a particular policing need is identified. This gives a direct line of communication with community representatives and when required, the RCT will

also attend the meetings to discuss specific problems. The RCT has an extensive network of contacts across Derbyshire in a variety of locations and organisations with who it regularly communicates and works in partnership.

- 9.2 In all areas, relationships are forged by local officers with key organisations and individuals. This is a continuous process and recognised as essential to delivering an effective service, especially as new challenges emerge.
- 9.3 By example, increases in incidents of fish poaching/theft of fishing rights in various areas of the county is an issue that the team have highlighted through the priority setting process. Whilst instances of fish poaching occur throughout the year, it has been recognised that this is seasonal and tends to increase in the late springtime. A particular issue was identified in the Bakewell/Haddon catchments with numerous incidents associated with groups visiting the area to take fish from private waters. The initial response is from river bailiffs employed by either the Environment Agency or the relevant private fishing estate (for example Haddon/Chatsworth), however the poaching offences are sometimes accompanied by anti-social behaviour and when approached there have been instances of threats of violence. This is an ongoing issue for which Local Authority, Parish Council, and community feedback will be sought to further inform and direct activities. Presently, the RCT have opened a PMP to collate incidents and review and inform policing activity.
- 9.4 So far in response to the problem, the RCT has worked with the Environment Agency and have produced a briefing to assist local officers and improve their knowledge of the specific law and offences as it was noted that in some incidents officers lacked a familiarity with some of the offences which hindered enforcement.
- 9.5 Over the last 12 months the RCT have been developing effective working relationships with other partnership agencies. The team meet with partners regularly and have conducted effective joint operations. For example, the RCT

have supported the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at search warrants, and the Environment Agency regarding a regional poaching and unlicensed fishing operation. The team have worked with Natural England, supporting their investigations into poison misuse and offences committed at Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The team have both supported and been supported by the RSPB and Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in various matters. The RCT regularly meet with partners to discuss emerging issues and keep up to date with ongoing projects.

10. SUB-OBJECTIVE 8: INCREASING CONFIDENCE IN REPORTING CRIME AND VULNERABILITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- 10.1 All officers and staff who serve in rural communities, including the RCT, are trained in recognising and dealing with vulnerability as all officers in the force are. Rolling programmes of training and professional development run by the force in areas such as domestic abuse and county lines, ensure officers are up to date and competent in these core areas of policing. The work with the Willow Project also supports this objective. By including staff from the Willow Project at our presence at public events such as agricultural shows, we are raising awareness in relation to domestic abuse within the rural and farming communities.
- 10.2 The RCT has also seen four new officers join in the last 12 months, bringing with them up to date knowledge and experience of more mainstream policing to complement the specialist skills of the wider team. This knowledge is invaluable when dealing with more traditional crime types and vulnerability in rural communities, and with issues outside of the core priorities of the RCT.
- 10.3 Within the last 12 months the constabulary has introduced the online reporting of rural and wildlife crime on the Derbyshire Constabulary website: [Report a wildlife crime | Derbyshire Constabulary](#) a service widely promoted by the RCT.

- 10.4 Key to success in this area are many of the activities detailed under sub objective 6. Good news stories, appeals for information and general updates are widely circulated through these mechanisms, and contact with both the RCT and local SNTs is encouraged. Both have well publicised mechanisms of contact through the force website, and a variety of social media channels.
- 10.5 The Constabulary also recognises the concerns in some rural communities that police attendance at incidents can be delayed owing to the geographic isolation. Using the ONS definitions of 'rural areas', the new performance analysis illustrates that in rural areas it takes on average an extra 7.4 minutes to arrive at an immediate call for service when compared to an urban area, and similarly with a priority grade incident it only takes an average of an extra 15.6 minutes for the first resources to arrive (Incident date range 1 January 2023 to 27 July 2023) when compared to urban areas. As mentioned previously in this report, this is just one metric of service delivery to rural communities that is being measured, analysed, and better understood to provide the best possible service.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Derbyshire Constabulary has made good progress in this priority area over the last 12 months. It has improved the operational effectiveness of the RCT itself, which is now fully staffed and benefits from the additional post of its first dedicated PCSO. Changes in their shift pattern also means they are more available, and better aligned to the needs of the rural communities.
- 11.2 Linkages with local policing resources have been significantly strengthened through a network of dedicated Rural Crime and Community Cohesion SPOCs and operational activity joined up and complemented through a new tasking process.
- 11.3 Having defined 'rural' and 'urban' areas, work with the performance team has enabled the force to begin to scrutinise and understand the issues and differences

in service provision affecting rural areas for the first time and will hopefully better inform operational and strategic policing decisions in the future.

- 11.4 Numerous strong partnerships have already been forged, and more are being developed in this area of work, many supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner. These partnerships are essential to good performance when tackling rural crime in all its forms.
- 11.5 The focus for the next 12 months is on bringing these elements together to maximise the targeted operational delivery of policing services to the rural community and cement Derbyshire Constabulary's reputation as a lead force in this area. Whilst retaining technical expertise and focus on their key priorities, the RCT will work more effectively alongside local policing and help deliver better policing to Derbyshire's rural communities.