

# RURAL CRIME STRATEGY

2019 - 2022

SCOTTISH  
PARTNERSHIP  
AGAINST  
RURAL  
CRIME



**SPARC**

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

# SPARC Members



# Foreword

**Welcome to the first strategy about preventing and tackling rural crime in Scotland.**

The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) recognises Scotland is renowned throughout the world for its historic past, outstanding natural beauty and ability for producing quality food and drink. Rural communities and the natural environment contribute greatly to this reputation but are not immune from those who pursue criminal activities.

SPARC recognises the need to tackle rural crime in all its forms plus target any criminality including those Serious Organised Crime Groups (SOCGs) who want to make money at the expense of hard working, law abiding people, thus threatening the very fabric of rural communities.

Whilst the volume of crime in rural communities and environments is often lower than in urban locations, the consequences and impact of an incident or crime committed often has a much deeper and far reaching impact, both on the victim and community as a whole.

It is also acknowledged particular challenges exist in tackling criminality, particularly with an all too common perception that the cost, extent and social impact of crime in rural areas is underestimated, under-reported and not fully understood.

This strategy outlines how we will work in partnership to tackle rural crime throughout Scotland.

*John McKenzie, Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland, Chair of the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime.*



# The Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime

SPARC is a multi-agency partnership involving key organisations collectively working together to tackle rural crime; in particular the increasing threat posed by SOCGs throughout Scotland. Providing strategic focus, SPARC co-ordinates a committed and sustained approach including crime prevention advice to those living, working and enjoying Scotland's rural communities and environments, drives and supports intelligence gathering plus enforcement activity, all underpinned through empowering communities to ensure these areas are safe places to live, work and visit.

## VISION

Regardless of geographical location, rural communities feel safe.

## AIM

Protecting rural communities with a focus on prevention, intelligence, enforcement and reassurance.

## OBJECTIVES

**Develop** resilient rural communities through effective partnerships utilising holistic, innovative and specialist techniques.

**Ensure** we listen, are visible and understand local and national concerns relating to rural crime.

**Harness** the contribution, expertise and knowledge of individuals, communities and relevant partner organisations in public, private and third sector to reduce vulnerabilities.

**Promote** and improve rural community cohesion where people feel safer regardless of location.

In order to achieve these objectives we will strive to change perception, educate and raise the profile of rural crime plus enhance public engagement to convey confidence that any crime-related issues affecting them are taken seriously, acted upon and understood.

# The Strategy



Scotland is home to a current population of 5.4 million people, 20% of whom live in rural communities, has a land mass of 30,420 square miles, 787 islands, (of which 130 are inhabited), a coastline including those islands that stretches over 10,250 miles, two designated national parks, (Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and The Cairngorms), more than 1,400 sites of special scientific interest (SSSI), six UNESCO World Heritage sites plus several thousand cultural and historic sites.

Rural Scotland is integral to the success of our nation. This is due to our tremendous natural assets renowned worldwide - coasts, landscape, rivers, seas and wildlife - all of which deliver vital produce and services. Scotland's rural assets significantly contribute an annual revenue to the economy whether directly or indirectly; for example tourism more than £11 billion, Scotch whisky more than £5 billion and agricultural output worth around £2.9 billion.

Scotland's communities, particularly rural communities can only flourish when people feel safe. Developing, maintaining and enhancing sustainable partnerships is key to achieving this.

SPARC can and will reduce the fear of crime and will build strong, resilient communities in which people can thrive and reach their potential.

This strategy provides a template for others to follow.

# Defining Rural

Rural Scotland is defined by the Scottish Government on settlement size. The National Records of Scotland defines it as namely a population of less than 3,000. This is further split into accessible rural - those with less than a 30 minutes' drive to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more - and remote rural - those with a greater than 30 minute drive to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.

Exceptions will always exist and it is important any village or smaller town communities, often surrounded by farmland and open space, are perceived as being rural despite their close proximity to Scotland's larger cities and towns.

# What is Serious Organised Crime?

Serious organised criminals make money at the expense of hard working, law abiding people through undermining legitimate business and threatening the fabric of communities. Due to increasing sophistication, organised crime is no longer observed as an urban phenomenon as the type of criminal activity and commodity targeted by SOCGs is irrelevant to their overriding priority - to derive power and profit at any cost to society.

Where there is flourishing financial growth, criminality is never slow to adapt or exploit whatever commodity will help fund their criminal lifestyles. Often perceived as a soft target and vulnerable, the rural communities and environment affords ample opportunity for SOCGs to believe they can go about their criminal activity undetected.

Serious organised crime is used to define crime which:

- **Involves more than one person**
- **Is organised, meaning that it involves control, planning and use of specialist resources**
- **Causes or has the potential to cause significant harm**
- **Involves benefit to the individual concerned, particularly financial gain.**

# What Is Rural Crime?

In the absence of a nationally agreed definition, for the purposes of this strategy and following consultation with key and relevant partners, SPARC members have collectively defined rural crime for Scotland as:

**“any crime that occurs in a rural location or affects any person living, working or visiting a rural location”.**

To fully understand the extent and impact crime can have on rural communities, SPARC will develop accurate and evolving analytical data reflecting the varying crime trends and types impacting with greatest significance plus identify those areas most frequently targeted or deemed vulnerable.

This will subsequently drive activity designed to increase prevention, gain intelligence plus carry out enforcement activity, in turn increasing reassurance to all those living, working and enjoying our rural communities and environment.

Acknowledging the majority of day to day incidents, crimes and offences covered by this definition will be reported to and investigated by relevant law enforcement, local authorities or organisations with reporting capabilities, SPARC will work in conjunction to reduce and tackle all levels of criminality, whether it be an individual acting alone or more organised crime groups.

Building on work previously undertaken coupled with recent consultation involving partners, SPARC has set the following priorities:

- **Agricultural vehicle, farm machinery and plant theft**
- **Equestrian incidents**
- **Fly tipping**
- **Fuel theft**
- **Heritage crime**
- **Livestock offences**
- **Poaching.**

Due to the amount of energy, focus and understanding required to successfully tackle each priority, whilst collectively supported by all SPARC members, organisations have been identified to take ownership for a priority most relevant to them.

In addition, due to the level of expertise and knowledge required coupled with national importance surrounding cultural and heritage assets, a sub group, the Scottish Heritage Crime Group (SHCG) has been formed with the remit of developing a strategy around protecting these plus reducing the damage and financial impact on them throughout Scotland.



## Poaching



- Hare coursing
- Supporting the poaching and coursing priority delivery group.



- Plant theft
- Farm and forestry machinery
- Agricultural and forestry equipment
- Quad bikes/all-terrain vehicles.

## Agricultural Vehicle, Farm Machinery and Plant Theft

## Livestock Offences



- Livestock theft
- Livestock attacks and distress
- Food supply chain, integrity and safety.



- Horse and tack theft
- Horse box/trailer theft
- Horse interference.

## Equestrian Incidents

## Heritage Crime



- Illegal metal detecting, theft of cultural and historic artefacts
- Anti-social behaviour/vandalism leading to damage at historic buildings or monuments.

# The 7 SPARC Priorities



- Domestic - particularly in rural locations
- Commercial - particularly from forestry sites.



- Household and commercial waste
- Waste through organised crime.

## Fly Tipping



## Fuel Theft

# Prevention Intelligence Enforcement Reassurance

SPARC seeks to provide a coordinated, focused and pro-active approach through effective partnerships coupled with increased visibility to reduce opportunities for those crimes that cause greatest threat, risk or harm to our rural communities and environment.

Particular emphasis will be given to identifying and responding to repeat victims and promoting Rural Watch which will increase confidence for reporting criminal activity. In addition SPARC will champion Secured By Design (SBD) crime prevention schemes designing out crime that not only reduce opportunities for criminality but help reduce the carbon footprint resulting from crime.

Establishing an accurate intelligence picture regarding the extent of rural crime occurring throughout Scotland is vital as this will assist SPARC in identifying criminal activity, trends and types plus geographical locations deemed most vulnerable. Listening to and gathering information from those who know their communities and environment best, we must develop a two-way exchange and act upon it accordingly. This will assist SPARC in developing processes and structures to facilitate the gathering of rural related information helping to drive a cohesive approach to disrupting and supporting prevention and detection of crime.

Collaborating with relevant agencies, organisations and partners, SPARC will drive opportunities to target and tackle criminals and SOCGs who have total disregard for the disruption, harm and misery they inflict. We all have a role to play in helping root out crime and in doing so reduce vulnerabilities in our rural communities and environment. Key to this will be increasing visibility against those who commit crimes and offences in rural areas coupled with implementation of effective legislative powers resulting in their detection then reporting to the most appropriate enforcement or organisational body.

The above ensures that individuals who live, work and enjoy Scotland's rural communities and environment are aware of the work being done on their behalf. SPARC is committed to listening, being visible plus understanding local and national concerns in order to reduce any perceived fear of crime whilst promoting a culture where people feel safer regardless of location.



## Action Plans

SPARC wants to be in a position where the partnership demonstrates activity driven through Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement and Reassurance has made tangible contributions in reducing and tackling crime within Scotland's rural communities and environment.

Creating Action Plans provided an opportunity for reflection following which discussion took place to ensure organisations most knowledgeable or had specific relevance to a particular priority were identified, took ownership and pro-actively lead on behalf of SPARC. It is important, the group and its partners set out what is to be achieved and how this will be done and includes indicators and measures of success within realistic timescales.

SPARC will revisit the plans to ensure they are working towards/achieving the agreed objectives, can demonstrate examples of improvement, progression or success plus factor in any new advances or unforeseen constraints which may impact on a priority area achieving its objective.



### Agricultural Vehicles and Plant: SPARC Lead - Police Scotland

| What We Want   | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success   | Timescales  |
|--|---|---|-------------|
| Disrupt criminals use of road network and promote safer use of these roads, particularly in rural locations.                             | Build local and national intelligence profiles of those involved in theft using all technology opportunities available.<br><br>Focus on safe use of road network, utilise multi-agency operational deployments plus increase use of Rural Watch to detect suspect vehicles.   | Increase information relating to routes, make and model of vehicles utilised by criminals plus reduction in criminality utilising rural road network. | Short Term  |
| Make it more difficult for criminals to steal for example: agricultural vehicles, farm and forestry machinery plus plant and quad bikes. | Identify, promote and encourage the use of crime prevention products and technologies, including protective marking and tracking devices.<br><br>Embed the crime prevention skill set within partner agencies, businesses and contractors.                                    | Uptake in protective marking schemes.<br><br>Crime prevention training delivery.  | Medium Term |
| Reduce the losses in Scotland through damage or theft of vehicles and plant machinery in rural locations.                                | Identify vulnerable sites (temporary and permanent) and provide early prevention interventions such as SBD.<br><br>Share examples of good practice; publicise successful convictions to deter others with a criminal mind-set; demonstrate confidence in the legal processes. | Reduction in financial or commercial losses.  | Long Term   |

## Action Plans

### Equestrian Incidents: SPARC Lead – British Horse Society



| What We Want   | How We Will Do This  | Indicators of Success   | Timescales  |
|--|--|---|-------------|
| Reduce instances of intentional or reckless injury or distress to horses, owners or keepers. | Highlight the consequences of dog aggression to horses through public campaigns.<br>Encourage reporting of suspicious activity around equine facilities and the early reporting of horse interference.   | Reduction in reported injury and crimes.  | Short Term  |
| Increase protection to horses and their riders on the road network.                          | Promote campaigns addressing road safety and encourage the reporting of incidents and 'near misses' on the public highway.<br>Promote 'Lose the Blinkers' and accident reporting on <a href="http://www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/report-an-incident">www.bhs.org.uk/our-work/safety/report-an-incident</a> and give guidance on and enforce safe vehicle transportation by owners. | Reduction in road accidents and injury involving horses or horse transportation vehicles. | Medium Term |
| Reduce horse-related theft including animals, stable and transportation equipment.           | Integrate a crime prevention philosophy into equestrian businesses and for our professional coaches.<br>Develop equine crime toolkits supporting prevention and investigation, promote 'Horsewatch' and develop stronger links with Rural Watch and disrupt the market for stolen equine equipment.  | Reduction in loss due to theft.<br>A crime prevention culture within equine community.    | Long Term   |

### Fly Tipping: SPARC Lead – Zero Waste Scotland



| What We Want   | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success  | Timescales  |
|--|---|--|-------------|
| Promote collaboration to identify and prosecute those unlawfully engaged in fly tipping.   | Ensure data and information sharing protocols are fit for purpose and encourage an intelligence-led approach resulting in multi-agency enforcement activity which maximises media opportunities.  | Increase number of fixed fines imposed, prosecutions and convictions.                      | Short Term  |
| Remove opportunities for organised criminality to benefit financially or in any other way from illegal waste disposal or management. | Promote and educate both prevention and enforcement obligations outlined within statutory and other guidance.<br>Disrupt the use of transport infrastructure by those engaged in fly tipping – regular engagement with the Traffic Commissioner and Transport Scotland. | Reduction and removal of assets from those engaged in fly tipping criminality.             | Medium Term |
| Reduce fly tipping sites and locations throughout Scotland.  | Gather and understand information available on fly tipping locations, volume and offenders to stimulate innovative regional delivery by partners and deliver national targeted campaigns.<br>Support and promote toolkits.  | Reduction in volume of waste resulting from fly tipping.<br>Reduction in "clean up" costs. | Long Term   |

## Action Plans

### Fuel Theft: SPARC Lead – Forestry & Land Scotland



| What We Want   | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success  | Timescales  |
|--|---|--|-------------|
| Make fuel more difficult to steal from both domestic rural locations and commercial sites such as forestry.    | Promote good security methods and products.<br>Share and encourage proven housekeeping and security practices.  | Reduction in fuel theft.<br>Evidence of unsuccessful attempts.   | Short Term  |
| Create rural environments that are unattractive to criminality.  | Encourage working practices that allow suspicious activity to appear more obvious to bone-fide staff, visitors and the public.<br>Produce 'top tips' for site security.   | Reduction in theft or attempted theft.   | Medium Term |
| Raise confidence in reporting suspicious activity and in the subsequent actions taken by relevant authorities. | Make reporting suspicious activity easier for landowners, contractors and the public so that it becomes 'the right and easy thing to do'.<br>Develop and share 'How to report' guides and support these with internal and external campaigns. | Improved recording of incidents by and for landowners, property owners and contractors.<br>Feedback from landowners and contractors. | Long Term   |

### Heritage Crime: SPARC Lead – Historic Environment Scotland



| What We Want   | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success  | Timescales  |
|--|---|--|-------------|
| Obtain a better understanding of where heritage crime is occurring and who it is committed by. | Awareness raising campaigns such as Crimestoppers and increased visibility of the Scottish Heritage Crime Group.<br>Explore technological opportunities to improve and interpret common data sets.  | Increased reporting.<br>Intelligence led prevention tactics. | Short Term  |
| Promote an understanding of 'what constitutes heritage crime'.                                 | Explain clearly the consequences of any damage caused on heritage sites to local communities and Scotland as a whole; share illustrative Community Impact Assessments; utilise communication and presentations – digital and physically at events.  | Increase in public and professional awareness.               | Medium Term |
| Protect historic sites and monuments from offences and antisocial behaviour.                   | Create accessible and current knowledge of heritage locations and their vulnerabilities within partner agencies. Produce information and assistance guides/literature.<br>Influence and support local authorities and landowners to protect heritage sites located on their land and encourage coordination of government processes and systems that have potential for relating to heritage locations. | Reduction in threats to or loss of heritage.                 | Long Term   |

## Action Plans

### Livestock Crimes: SPARC Lead – NFU Scotland



| What We Want  | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success  | Timescales  |
|---|---|--|-------------|
| Reduce instances of livestock attacks and distress caused by dogs.  | Develop clear, practical and seasonal multimedia messaging to coordinate local and national campaigns focusing on consequential outcomes plus publicise any successful prosecutions.  | Repeated yearly reductions in harm and distress to livestock.  | Short Term  |
| Prevent the illegal entry of animal products into the Scottish food chain.                                      | Work with and support the activities of Food Standards Scotland.<br>Increase awareness of the risks posed to the food chain plus support 'food crime' campaigns and other alerting processes to ensure unlawful practices are quickly highlighted to the enforcing authorities. | Increased intelligence followed by successful prosecutions.  | Medium Term |
| Promote and assist understanding of responsible activities on farmland within the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. | Develop appropriate and unambiguous guidance for dog owners, landowners and all law enforcement agencies.   | Increase in reporting of livestock worrying incidents.<br>Reduction in occurrence of livestock attacks/distress incidents. | Long Term   |

### Poaching: SPARC Lead – Scottish Land & Estates

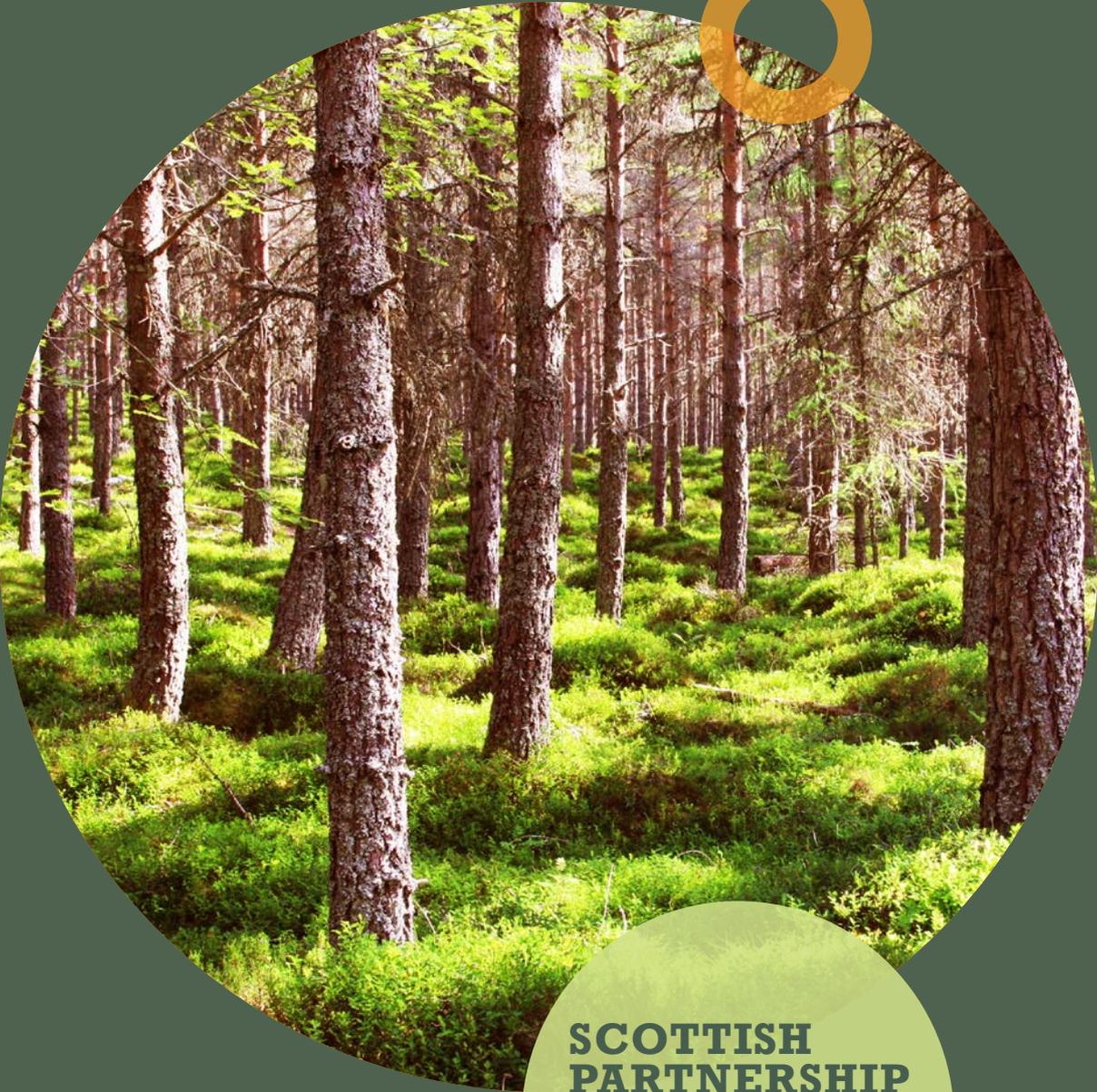


| What We Want  | How We Will Do This   | Indicators of Success  | Timescales  |
|---|---|--|-------------|
| Make poaching a 'high risk activity' for those individuals engaging in this criminality.  | Encourage public reporting.<br>Increased awareness and training within all law enforcement communities on the response and enforcement pathway from initial report as well as publish details of successful detection and prosecutions. | Increased detection, prosecutions and convictions.   | Short Term  |
| Raise profile of poaching as a problem and explain the consequences in terms of biodiversity, food safety and links to organised criminals. | Communicate, provide guidance, influence and support landowners and occupiers that they have an important role in contributing to the prevention and disruption of poaching activities.   | Evidence of preventative and disruptive measures being deployed by non-law enforcement partners. | Medium Term |
| Support the activities of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) in Scotland.  | Endorse and participate in PAW (Scotland) campaigns.<br>Strengthen links with and support the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Poaching and Coursing Priority Delivery Group.  | Develop wider and increased campaign audiences.  | Long Term   |

# Rural Calendar



For further information about SPARC or this strategy contact -  
[www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)



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