PS Walshaw states

This has been a very busy period for the Rural Team. I am pleased to report that the team is now up to 11 PC’s and just waiting for the final officer to join us from his existing role. I think you will see from the below report the increase in numbers is already producing some great results. There is now a dedicated rural officer on duty every day of the week. We have introduced divisional mobile phone numbers an easier and more efficient way to contact the team.

This period has seen a spate of Livestock worrying incidents which are being investigated by the team. I would urge dog owners to be responsible when walking their pets and ensure they are kept under control at all times but especially around fields containing livestock.
Here is a snapshot of the work carried out by the Rural Liaison Team (RLT) over the last six weeks.

**Op Salmon**

RLT officers conducted follow up enquiries in Cox Heath concerning a vehicle involved in poaching on the North Downs. The vehicle believed to be involved in poaching was located nearby damaged and abandoned on a verge. It was found to have no current keeper and to be uninsured. The vehicle was insecure and when being searched for the driver or owner ID, feathers were located inside along with a catapult on the front seat which was seized.

A land owner in Hollingbourne discovered damage to a gate on his land and nearby was half of an index plate and a smashed indicator bulb from a Land Rover. Tracks in the field showed the vehicle had been driven around it. It was suspected to be a vehicle stolen on 11th October 2018. An area search was conducted in nearby byways and woodlands to see if the vehicle had been dumped. It was not found but officers did discover another burnt out suspect vehicle from a previously reported Anti-Social Behaviour incident in Doddington, where the vehicle had been seen stuck in fields suspected to be hare coursing.

![Damaged Vehicle](image)

PC’s Callaghan and Moody carried out a stop check in Goodnestone, Canterbury on a vehicle seen driving slowly towards Rowling. The vehicle was searched under the Poaching Prevention Act, due to circumstances in which it was seen, the fact the driver couldn’t really account for being in the location, and the fact he had a lurcher type dog in the back. A lamp and a slip/lead were located in the rear of the vehicle, however, offences could not be proven. The vehicle owner was warned his vehicle, dog and equipment would be seized if he was caught again and he was told to leave the area.
PC Reed received a phone call from a Farmer in Thanet stating that persons were hare coursing on the farm land. PC’s Southern and Reed were in the immediate vicinity and conducted an area search for a suspect vehicle. During the course of the search persons were spotted in a field to the west of the farm. They were located hiding in a wooded area on the farm land. Also with them were two lurcher dogs. Local Farmers had also found a dead hare in the field. Officers had seen an unattended vehicle on the farmland next door whilst area searching. They established that this was the vehicle the males were using and that there was another lurcher dog within it. The vehicle was seized for being used in crime. All three males were transported to Margate Custody and interviewed. All three have been reported for summons to court.

RLT Officers responded to a report of lamping in progress. PC Callaghan attended the scene and located a suspect vehicle that he subsequently searched, under the Poaching Prevention Act. A lamp and lurcher dog were located. A Community Protection Warning is being issued as a result.

PC’s Southern and Tancock attended an address in Herne Bay to issue the occupant with a Section 59 warning. This was following an incident at a farm in Birchington where the vehicle was seen driving across the Farmers’ fields. The driver was not at the address however he later phoned PC Southern and agreed to meet at Canterbury Police Station where the section 59 warning was issued.
PC’s Perry and Moody attended the home address of a male who had been issued with a previous Community Protection Warning for Hare Coursing. This followed reports of suspected hare coursing in Lydd earlier in the week where a vehicle linked to him was seen to make off from officers.

A further Community Protection Warning reminder was served which the male refused to acknowledge and he became abusive to the officers which was all captured on body worn camera and will be saved for evidence should the warning be breached.

The officers attended the home address of another male in Ashford who is also subject to a Community Protection Warning for coursing offences, he was also not happy to receive a reminder following further reports of his vehicle being in the vicinity of hare coursing activity.

PC’s Moody, Perry and Williams responded to a report of a vehicle driving all over crops and causing damage in Pluckley. Muddy tyre tracks were seen to lead from the location to an address nearby linked to a male. Nothing was found at his home address however the officers attended another location he was linked to and located the suspect vehicle hidden. Enquiries failed to establish the owner, and the vehicle was subsequently recovered for CSI examination. The place where the vehicle was located is the same location where a stolen tractor and ride on mower where hidden and found by police earlier in the year.
Whilst PC’s Southern and Goodsall were on route to a live poaching incident in Ashford a vehicle came towards them at speed with a horse box attached. The vehicle was travelling at such speed that the horse box was swaying all over the road. Officers turned around to locate the vehicle which was found entering a location nearby. As officers approached, the occupants of the vehicle decamped. Enquiries made at the scene showed the vehicle to have no insurance and it was seized. It was suspected that the horse box was stolen so this was also seized, this has subsequently been confirmed and the horse box returned to the owner. Enquiries are ongoing.
Court Update

A hearing at Margate Magistrates Court last month relating to an Op Salmon poaching investigation found David Lee and Steven Robson guilty of daytime poaching and hunting a wild mammal with a dog, respectively. PC Callaghan attended an additional Criminal Behaviour Order hearing on 22nd October at Folkestone Magistrates Court. In this further hearing both defendants did not attend and the hearing was held in their absence. They have both received a three year Criminal Behaviour Order which carries various restrictions. The order allows police to take action against the men if they are seen trespassing any land in Kent with dogs. Officers do not have to prove the men are hare coursing and they will face a prison sentence if they breach the terms of the order. This is the first time Criminal Behaviour Orders have been used to tackle rural crimes like poaching and the use of the legislation is recognised as good practice nationally. Hare coursing evidentially is a complex crime to prove and it is difficult to secure convictions. By using criminal behaviour orders in this way the RLT can tackle the issue more effectively.

Op Siskin

The team executed a warrant under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1984 at an address in Sittingbourne, alongside the RSPCA. The warrant was applied for under the Wildlife and Countryside Act as evidence had been received that the occupiers were trapping wild birds. At the location officers found two wild, caught Goldfinches in a bedroom which were seized by the RSPCA. The subsequent search located a motorbike with all identifiable markings removed which was later found to be stolen. The bike is now being returned to its owner. Also located was a quantity of herbal cannabis and a tin containing a white paste.

Stolen motorbike located at the address
Trapped wild birds at the location
Op Assist

Officers carried out high profile patrols of fly tipping hotspots alongside Sevenoaks District Council Fly Tipping Enforcement Team. Ten vehicles were stopped and checked for carrying waste. Eight fixed penalties were issued to a total of £2,400 in fines. Valuable intelligence was also gained concerning known organised criminals.

Officers worked alongside Maidstone Borough Council dealing with Organised Crime Groups involved in the illegal movement and fly tipping of waste. In total ten vehicles were stopped which resulted in £900 worth of fines. One vehicle was seized for waste carrying offences and another vehicle was seized for having no insurance.
Whilst assisting Medway Council as part of Op Assist PC’s Pennicott and Smith seized a vehicle in Gravesend that had been identified for fly tipping offences and was full of waste which was likely to be dumped illegally. A male linked to the vehicle was suspected of committing a number of fly tips over the past two years and is currently being investigated by Medway Council.

Whilst engaged in the operation PC’s Goodsall and Tanncock saw a female who was well known to both officers as being a prolific shoplifter from Swale and was shown as being wanted for two shop lifting offences, one in Medway and one in West Kent. She was arrested for these outstanding offences.

The RLT attended an address in Gravesend with the Environment team from Medway Council. Whilst at the location, a golf buggy was located on the drive way and checks conducted with the manufacturer confirmed that the buggy had been stolen from a golf course in Essex. The vehicle was seized and the owner updated.

PC’s Reed and Williams seized a vehicle in Chatham under Section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act for fly tipping offences.
Spate of Sheep Worrying Incidents

Images relating to these incident are to graphic and distressing to publish

A sheep farmer in Meopham reported to police that they had found six dead sheep and six injured sheep that appeared to have been attacked by a dog. Sergeant Walshaw was in contact with the farmer regarding the incident.

Officers received a call directly from a farmer in the Wingham area reporting that he had found the remains of six dead sheep on his farm. A discarded drinks can was also located next to the carcasses, which was preserved for collection.

PC’s Southern and Reed responded to reports of a dog attack in Doddington. Officers attended and spoke to the sheep owner who confirmed that one sheep had to be put down due to injuries sustained and another has survived with a bitten neck requiring vet treatment. The sheep owner had caught the dogs in the act of biting a sheep and could provide police with photographic evidence of this. Forensic evidence was gathered from the scene including swabs from the sheep’s injuries. It is suspected that the 2 dogs were also responsible for a livestock worrying incident in Blean where another sheep had to be destroyed due to the injuries sustained. The owner of the dogs has been interviewed and the investigation/prosecution continues.

In August two separate Livestock worrying offences took place at a farm in Maidstone. During both incidents a lurcher breed dog was witnessed chasing sheep and causing injury to them. During the first incident the sheep owner chased the dog off but injury had been caused to the animals. On the second occasion the same dog had killed sheep and the owners of the dog were chasing it around. A warning was given by the sheep owner to control the dog otherwise it would be shot. The landowner returned to his home address,
retrieved his gun and returned to the field before shooting and fatally injuring the dog. Police attended the address of the dog’s owner and spoke to him. The dog’s owner confirmed that it was his dog involved in the sheep attack incident. Since this interaction with this male and a second visit to his address, officers have received contact from the sheep’s owner. They have confirmed that civil representation had been made by the dog’s owner to compensate him for the monetary loss of his sheep, which he has accepted.

Nine sheep were reported to have been killed on a farm near Canterbury by two large dogs. The farmer re-attended the field adjacent to the incident the following day and found two dogs chasing sheep. He identified these dogs as those he had seen previously attacking his livestock and he shot and killed one of the dogs. Swabs have been taken from the dog, and from the sheep that were killed in the attack. The current owner of the dog that was shot has not been traced or identified. No one has called in to report the loss of their dog.

A further sheep worrying incident occurred at another farm in Canterbury. One sheep was killed and several others injured, requiring stitches and antibiotics.

PC Moody attended a farm in Headcorn following incidents of sheep worrying. Advice was given to the landowners regarding their rights in relation to protecting their livestock. Investigations are ongoing.

A farmer in Harrietsham reported that two of her sheep had been stabbed, however on subsequently speaking to the vets it is possible that the animals were attacked by a dog. Two males had been seen in the field behind the property with a dog and one of the dogs had blood on it. At this time the males have not yet been identified.

**Appeal**

There has been a theft from an estate near Ashford where a statue worth £10,000 and with huge sentimental value was stolen overnight. It is a bronze statue of a famous greyhound known as Ballyregan Bob. It is approximately 130cm long and about 75cm in height and would require at least two people to carry it.
Op Chronos

The Rural Liaison Team carried out a search warrant at an address in Rainham. This related to information gathered from social media that an occupant was illegally in possession of a Bronze Age axe head. The male was present and the axe head was located as well as a number of other items that are believed to have been collected by metal detecting illegally. The finds included 25 Ingots and it has been confirmed that it is extremely rare to have this many of them. The Bronze Age hoard was seized along with the other items and the offender has been interviewed. Canterbury Archaeological Trust, British museum and Historic England have examined the items assisting the investigation.

The strong relationship with Canterbury Archaeological Trust ensured information was supplied to the RLT that has resulted in the large hoard of bronze ingots being recovered at once, having been taken illegally. This demonstrates the specialist Heritage crime knowledge and capability of the Rural Liaison Team officers. The find was described as a result of significant importance in preserving our heritage.

Op Innovate

Fifteen police officers from the Rural Task Force and Swale Community Policing Team teamed up with farmers, land owners and local residents in the rural community to tackle rural crime as part of a national day of action. Officers were briefed first and then deployed and an instruction/safety briefing was then given to the civilians. Members of the rural community from Maidstone and Swale supported police and got in touch if they witnessed any suspicious activity. The shift started with a briefing where the farmers, Game Keepers and landowners were given maps with grid references. This allowed them to report back to the patrols quickly where incidents were taking place.

Nine vehicles were stopped during the operation. Though the effort was in support of the National Day of Action to tackle rural crime, similar patrols are run on a regular basis across
Kent where the rural team work closely with the local rural community. During the shift, PC Lingham received a call from a Game Keeper regarding a suspicious vehicle in a field in West Malling. On attendance a vehicle containing five occupants was stopped. The vehicle and occupants were searched where a catapult and ball bears were found inside the vehicle. Enquiries at scene were unable to establish any poaching offences but the driver was dealt with for traffic document offences.

Sergeant Darren Walshaw, who co-ordinated the effort said: ‘We wanted to support the national rural policing day of action, however, the day was very much business as usual for my officers and we had some good results.’

‘The feedback from the rural community was overwhelmingly positive. Quite often those living in rural areas feel isolated. Our efforts have further opened the channels of communication with people who feel vulnerable to crime, increasing the intelligence we receive and also allowing us to offer crime prevention advice.

‘With the increase in numbers to the rural team in Kent we are keen to send a message to those involved in theft, poaching and hare coursing that people in rural communities are working with us to stop them in their tracks.’
Op Blackboard

Rural Task Force Officers assisted Dover Community Officers and Officers from Trading Standards executing a warrant at a location in Sandwich. The warrant was executed and two arrests were made of two males who were escorted to the custody area at Canterbury Police Station. A search was conducted which took seven hours and numerous vehicle documents and paperwork were seized along with various vehicle components and a large amount of cash. Three vehicles were seized; one being stolen, with a stolen engine inside and another stolen engine and gearbox were also located, identified as stolen and seized.
Op Dew

Operation Traverse is a joint Operation with Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement. It is a National Operation Supported by a number of other Police Forces including the vast majority of those in the South East and Eastern Regions. The Rural Team have been carrying out Operation Dew in support of Operation Traverse. As part of this operation the officers conducted a joint Patrol at fisheries in West Kent. In total 100 people were checked in relation to Rod Licence Evasion and provided with crime prevention advice in relation to their equipment. Nine people were prosecuted for rod licence offences and will receive fines starting from £200. Two people were issued with cannabis warnings in relation to possession of cannabis and valuable intelligence was gained.

Vehicle Thefts

PC Lingham and Williams assisted with a deployment to a tracker activation in Tonbridge. At the location the officers located what was believed to be the flatbed tipper section from a stolen vehicle, also located within in a shipping container was a confirmed stolen Landrover and a road roller also believed to be stolen. All three items were recovered and will undergo CSI examination and Vehicle Examiners scrutiny.
PC Williams assisted West Kent officers with a stolen tracker activation on a vehicle and trailer which had been stolen, with keys, that morning. The vehicle and trailer were located deep inside woodland in West Peckham. Due to the access and location it would have been impossible for a recovery agent to recover the vehicle and trailer. PC Williams contacted the victim and arranged for him to attend the location with spare keys. It took over an hour to recover the vehicle and trailer but thankfully they were recovered with no damage caused.

PC’s Southern and Reed assisted with a Vehicle Failing to stop for other units on the M2. Four males decamped from the vehicle and went across fields which included running across live lanes on the M2. The officers assisted with an area search alongside the Dog Unit and Air Support. The vehicle was identified as having been stolen in Surrey. Located within the vehicle was a number of Keys for high end cars and various number plates. The vehicle was linked to a number of recent burglaries and thefts. Enquiries continue.
PC’s Pennicott and Lingham carried out an area search following an ANPR activation of a stolen vehicle in Maidstone. The vehicle was located parked in a supermarket car park by PC’s Pennicott and Lingham it was blocked in by the officers. Two people were detained in the vehicle. The driver was arrested for Theft of a Motor Vehicle. He was also found to be in possession of a stolen credit card that had been stolen during the vehicle theft and had subsequently been used to commit several frauds. Search of the vehicle also located Class A drugs and he was also arrested for Possession of Class A drugs. The passenger was also arrested for a Theft of a Motor Vehicle.

A call was received from a Farm Watch Member to report a sighting of a stolen vehicle in a field in Folkestone. Officers attended the location and the vehicle was located and returned to its owner. Due to the interior being covered in diesel there was unfortunately no forensic evidence to recover.

Whilst engaged in another operation, PC Lingham spotted a vehicle believed to be involved in a series of recent burglaries. The vehicle was followed into a cul-de-sac where the occupants decamped and made off on foot. PC Lingham preserved the vehicle and arranged recovery for CSI examination. Whilst waiting with the vehicle, he co-ordinated with other units to establish a direction of travel of the occupants. This investigation is ongoing.
A stop check was carried out on a vehicle containing two males from Lincolnshire who were collecting furniture in Kent. The vehicle was found to be uninsured and was seized.

PC Southern attended the location of an arson attack at some stables in the Teynham area. Thankfully, no horses were in the stables when it was set alight. There were thirty five bales of hay and other equipment that were completely destroyed. Police have now arrested a male in connection with the arson attack and secured further evidence in relation to cannabis cultivation.
A stop check was carried out in Ashford on a vehicle which was found to have no insurance and the driver to have no driving license. Both occupants had previous convictions for acquisitive crime offences and the vehicle was seized.
PC’s Pennicott and Cross followed a vehicle in Yalding containing two males avoiding eye contact with the officers. The vehicle was initially lost but then located and followed towards Paddock Wood. The vehicle was stopped and both male occupants detained. The vehicle smelled strongly of cannabis and both males appeared extremely nervous. A small deal bag of cannabis was visible in the vehicle which one of the males stated was his. Both men were detained for a search and further evidence was secured supporting drug supply. Both males were arrested for Possession with Intent to Supply.

In a subsequent search at one of the male’s home address, further evidence of Cannabis supply/cultivation was secured.
Whist carrying out a patrol in West Kent, RLT officers came across a vehicle driving at speed. The vehicle was stopped in Frittenden. Inside the vehicle was a half drunk glass of beer and a wrap of suspected cocaine or amphetamine. The driver failed the roadside breath test and was arrested for Drink Driving and possession of Class A drugs. The vehicle was not insured to him and enquiries are ongoing with the owner to establish if he will be prosecuted for driving offences also.

RLT officers attended a road traffic collision in West Kingsdown. Two vehicles were involved with the occupants suffering minor injuries.
Kent Police stray horse seizure policy is now a year on and continues to be efficient making significant savings for the force. Two horses were returned to their owners in Dartford under the Kent Police Horse Seizure Policy.

Officers stopped a vehicle from the Sittingbourne area as it tried to evade officers when its occupants saw them. The vehicle showed up as having no insurance and was seized as a result.
PC’s Southern and Goodsall assisted the Traffic unit with a road traffic collision between a lorry and a car where fortunately no injuries occurred.

Whilst making enquiries at a farm in Selling, PC’s Southern and Williams were informed by the land owner that a vehicle had been found abandoned in his field overnight. The vehicle was located, completely stuck in the mud. Upon inspecting the vehicle a male and female got out of the back seats. The male stated that they had taken a wrong turn during the night and got stuck in the mud and that their phone had died so they could not call anyone. A small bag of cannabis was located in the car which was dealt with via a Cannabis Warning. The vehicle was moved by a tractor to Selling Railway Station so the owner could get assistance.
A dog owner from Sheppey whose dog, Peaches, was stolen three years ago got in touch with the RLT to report that she had received a letter from a dog chipping company because someone had tried to re-register the dog in Sussex. PC Southern established the new owner details with the company. An officer in Sussex attended the owners address and it was confirmed that Peaches was the dog in question. The RLT collected Peaches and returned her to the original family who had her stolen from them in 2015. Accounts have been taken from the purchasers and enquires are continuing into where they purchased Peaches from. The family of Peaches are extremely happy to have had her returned to them.

Peaches returned.
**Court Results**

A hearing has taken place before Medway Magistrates Court in relation to a warrant carried out by the RLT alongside the RSPCA in June in relation to birds being illegally trapped in Gravesend. The search warrant was conducted based on information received from the RSPB and resulted in caged birds being seized. Mr Gadzor admitted possessing wild birds and items for trapping birds. He pled guilty to three charges. As a result he is now subject to a twenty eight day curfew where he must stay at his home address between 7pm and 7am and he has been ordered to pay £300 in costs and an £85 victim surcharge.

This is an excellent example of partnership working. The intelligence received from the RSPB allowed us to gain enough information to request a search warrant and the case built by the RSPCA resulted in the man having to admit his guilt. Bird trapping is not only illegal, it is incredibly cruel. We are committed to working with our partner agencies to put these criminals, who illegally trap birds for their own financial gain, before the court.

An RSPCA spokesperson said: ‘To take a wild bird from its natural habitat and shut it inside a tiny cage is so cruel. They suffer greatly in captivity, are not used to being in cages and, sadly, often die. All wild birds in England and Wales, their nests and their eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and actions may only be taken under specific licences.’

It is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to trap wild birds.

Rat glue smeared on branches at the address
A drink driver, who narrowly avoiding hitting PS Walshaw and PC Reed whilst they were travelling back from force open day preparation has been disqualified from driving for twelve months and has been fined £1,200.

Kind Regards, Darren Walshaw

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