

# Wildlife Crime Policing Strategy

*Safeguarding our wildlife*

2018 - 2021





# I. Background

- I.1 The conservation and preservation of wildlife is very important to both our natural world and our society. A flourishing wildlife environment provides people with a tremendous sense of personal wellbeing and fulfillment from their wildlife encounters. The continued protection of wildlife ensures biodiversity and promotes economic growth. Additionally, wildlife also needs to be protected for its intrinsic, cultural and aesthetic value and for the vital role it plays in healthy ecosystems. The conservation of species and the prevention of animal cruelty is the responsibility of all. This will ensure wildlife is conserved for current and future generations and animal welfare is protected.
- I.2 It is important to understand our communities and encourage the reporting of wildlife crime. The National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) survey 2015 found that the true level and cost of crime is substantially higher than official and other figures suggest. This is largely due to a significant level of crime that goes unreported.
- I.3 Wildlife crime takes place in urban and suburban environments as well as in rural areas. Wildlife plays a key part in farming and supporting the economy. Increased biodiversity can help farming by stabilising ecosystems, promoting pollination and also benefiting farmers via the countryside stewardship grants.
- I.4 Although there are many definitions, wildlife crime can be defined as: any action which contravenes current legislation governing the protection of wild animals and plants. This includes:
- Hare coursing, fish and deer poaching
  - Illegal badger persecution including baiting, shooting, snaring, lamping, poisoning and the interference of badger setts
  - Bat persecution
  - Bird of prey persecution through poisoning, trapping, shooting, disturbance of nest and/or theft of chicks, egg theft / collection
  - The trade in ivory, tortoises, and other protected species covered by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) including caviar, traditional Chinese medicines, and orchids, and the non-registration of certain birds and animals that require licensing through DEFRA/Animal and Plant Health Agency if kept in captivity or sold
- Furthermore, concern is growing daily about levels of disturbance to protected marine life all around our coasts. As marine ecotourism is a well-established and still fast growing tourism activity, the potential to cause wildlife harm is growing too
  - The remit of wildlife crime doesn't include incidents involving domestic animals such as dogs (other than dogs being used to hunt mammals), cats, rabbits, budgies, etc and doesn't include wild animals that have been involved in road traffic accidents
  - The agreed wildlife crime priorities are covered later in the strategy. These are not exclusively police matters; the police will lead on investigation and prosecution of a range of offences relating to wildlife
- I.5 The trafficking of wildlife is increasingly recognised as both a specialised area of organised crime and a significant threat to many plant and animal species. Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (President of United for Wildlife) said "The illegal wildlife trade is now the fourth most lucrative transnational crime after drugs, arms and human trafficking. It is estimated to be worth between 10 and 20 billion dollars each year." HM Government's 2018 report: "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" supports this statement by saying, "The illegal wildlife trade is the fourth most lucrative transboundary crime, with an estimated value of up to £17bn per year".
- I.6 The money generated from the global trade in wildlife has been linked to funding terrorist activities with those involved operating in the fashion of cartels with multiple Organised Crime Groups working to a common purpose. The exploitation of wildlife is a low risk high reward form of crime. The 2016 Wildlife Crime Report by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime shows the extensive involvement of transnational Organised Crime Groups in illegal trade of wildlife and the pervasive impact of corruption, demonstrating that combating wildlife crime warrants even greater attention and resources at all levels (UNODC "World Wildlife Crime Report", 2016).
- I.7 The police have specific statutory obligations to protect and enhance biodiversity. These include: The Bern Convention, Section 40 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and regulation 9 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. These are best addressed by demonstrating an effective response to wildlife crime.

- 1.8 Wildlife crime and rural affairs form a significant part of policing, as such the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) portfolio 'Wildlife Crime and Rural Affairs' is led by senior police officers who work with a range of stakeholders. This strategy focuses on wildlife crime whilst having reference to particular aspects of the NPCC Rural Affairs Strategy 2018-2021. (hyperlink to NPCC Rural Affairs Strategy 2018-2021)
- 1.9 The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) <http://www.nwcu.police.uk> , based in Stirling, supports police forces and partner organisations across the UK in their efforts to prevent and combat wildlife crime. The Unit's stated purpose is to:
- Research, share, and exchange information where appropriate with police forces and partners in support of combating wildlife crime
  - Support police forces and partner agencies in criminal investigations when required
  - Identify Organised Crime Groups involved in wildlife crime through the information sharing process
  - Enhance cross-border work both domestically and internationally between police forces and partners
  - Develop methods of working together between all agencies in reducing wildlife crime and enhancing conservation
- 1.10 This is very much a partnership endeavour with stakeholders who are experts in their areas. For example, the Border Force provides essential border enforcement in many areas including in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Other partners include Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Northern Ireland Department for the Environment, Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) for example: the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Angling Trust, NatureWatch Foundation, League Against Cruel Sports, The Badger Trust, and the Bat Conservation Trust. At a local level smaller volunteer groups provide localised partnership support.
- 1.11 The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime UK (PAW) has a large and varied membership of key wildlife partners. It is coordinated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and co-chaired with the National Police Chiefs' Council wildlife crime lead. The PAW helps statutory organisations and NGOs to work together to combat wildlife crime. PAW's objectives are to:
- Raise awareness of wildlife legislation and the impacts of wildlife crime
  - Help and advise on wildlife crime and regulatory issues
  - Make sure that wildlife crime is tackled effectively
- 1.12 On a more local level, trained Police Wildlife Crime Officers (PWCOs) provide knowledge and experience in this specialised area and are often used as an advisory point of contact in force for other officers. This wildlife crime training is often a skill used alongside other operational police roles. PWCOs work activity includes conducting investigations, planning and executing proactive operations, developing intelligence and promoting prevention. The NWCU can also support local investigations when specialist support is necessary.

## 2. Current Situation

- 2.1 In October 2017, a national benchmarking exercise was undertaken to better understand the environment and current investment being made into rural and wildlife crime policing across the UK.
- 2.2 Results from the benchmarking exercises have shown that there, are as of October 2017, a total of 578 Police Wildlife Crime Officers (PWCO) across the UK. 39 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales have at a least some trained wildlife crime capability. The 578 figure mentioned also includes PWCOs of Police Scotland and the British Transport Police.
- 2.3 Separate to these findings Police Service Northern Ireland were found to conduct wildlife training to all officers as part of their student officer training.



## 3. Purpose

- 3.1 Following scoping exercises at a number of engagement events in 2017 with a wide range of key wildlife stakeholders and Police Wildlife Crime Officers, the agreed overall wildlife crime strategic aims were identified to be to:
- Enhance the conservation of wildlife
  - Develop strong partnership and stakeholder working
  - Raise public awareness of wildlife crime
  - Embed a wildlife focus into policing culture
  - Improve recording of wildlife crime
  - Improve wildlife crime legislation with proportionate sentences
  - Secure future funding for the NWCU
  - Develop information sharing agreements with key stakeholders
  - Tackle Organised Crime Groups
- 3.2 There will also be a continuous link to this portfolio's sister NPCC Rural Affairs Strategy 2018-2021, as well as other intrinsically linked themes, such as Heritage and Cultural Property Crime. It is important to recognise that wildlife and rural crime and associated anti-social behaviour has an adverse impact on the natural environment and heritage assets found across the UK.
- 3.3 Engagement with all communities and partners is essential to enhancing the flow of intelligence. Importantly, publicising good news stories and positive results of police and partnership action will create an effective and positive cycle. Collectively, this will contribute to the conservation and preservation of our wildlife.

## 4. Approach

- 4.1 Through harnessing the passion, expertise, and contributions of partners joined with the policing effort we will:
- Adopt a clear philosophy based upon intelligence-led and evidence-based approaches, inclusive partnership, infrastructure that drives improvement, prioritisation against greatest risk, effective prevention, engagement and communication
  - Develop plans at the strategic, regional, and local levels
  - Recognise and plan for both operational and organisational requirements
  - Agree priorities and support those through sound infrastructure
  - Incrementally build on successes which are appropriately resourced, tested and assessed for benefits
- 4.2 Alongside the focus on tackling wildlife crime, we will assess and focus on the associated criminality such as violence, intimidation and anti-social behaviour.

## 5. Priorities

- 5.1 Operational Wildlife Priorities
- 5.1.1 The operational wildlife crime priorities are split into 'conservation priorities' and 'enforcement priorities'. The conservation priorities are set by the Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) which is comprised of UK statutory nature conservation organisations, other statutory agencies, and relevant NGOs. The Group, coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), assesses the conservation risk to species and habitats from wildlife crime and the importance of enforcement intervention.
- The enforcement priorities are informed through the National Intelligence Model (NIM) as well as using MoRiLE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement) scoring tool which is the prioritisation of the threats. The information gathered through the above processes assists the NWCUC in creating a two yearly strategic assessment that is presented to the UK Tasking and Coordination Group (UKTCG) that confirms the agreed national operation wildlife crime priorities. These priorities are then reviewed bi-annually in a UKTCG meeting chaired by NPCC leads and supported through the NWCUC.
- 5.1.2 The two yearly strategic assessment took place in early 2018 and priorities were confirmed (see next page). Each priority area has a Priority Delivery Group with a plan owner and leads identified for the prevention and enforcement of these crimes. The NWCUC is represented on all groups to provide the intelligence lead.



## **BADGER PERSECUTION**

Objective: Improve and increase the recording of incidents, crimes and intelligence for badger persecution. Improve the investigation process and increase awareness of badger persecution across the UK.

## **BAT PERSECUTION**

Objective: To reduce bat crime by: working with key stakeholders to raise awareness of responsibilities and criminal offences against bats, promoting a preventative approach and improving the quality of intelligence submissions and standards of investigation relating to bats across the UK.

## **“CITES “**

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Including: current priorities of European Eel; illegal trade in raptors; ivory; medicinal & health products; reptiles; rhino horn and timber.

Objective: Increase the number of disruption activities and detections of illegal trade in CITES priority species by: Increasing the amount of targeted compliance activity, increasing the quality of intelligence submissions and intelligence products produced, improve the quality of analytical assessments and complete in agreed time-scales, and increase the number of investigations and enforcement outcomes.

## **FRESHWATER PEARL MUSSELS (FWPM)**

Objective: Raise awareness of criminality affecting freshwater pearl mussels in order to facilitate intelligence and incident reporting, leading to increased prevention and enforcement action.

## **RAPTOR PERSECUTION**

Including: Shooting, poisoning, egg theft, chick theft, trapping, taking from the wild and nest disturbance/destruction and to concentrate on Golden Eagle, Goshawk, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Red Kite, and White-Tailed Eagle.

Objective: Raise community trust and awareness to facilitate intelligence and incident reporting, leading to increased prevention and enforcement activity relating to raptor persecution.

## **POACHING**

Including: Hare coursing, deer poaching/coursing and fish poaching; anti-social behaviour and threatening behaviour that can be seen alongside this activity.

Objective: To increase the level of awareness of poaching and hare coursing as serious wildlife crimes and build better trust and relationships between law enforcement agencies and local communities, both leading to increase prevention activity, better quality intelligence, and enforcement success.

5.2 Initial operational work on these identified priorities will be delivered through a small number of Wildlife Crime Priority Delivery Groups, with a focus on prevention, intelligence, reassurance and enforcement. The groups will:

- Raise the profile of wildlife crime
- Set objectives to tackle these wildlife crimes
- Utilise effective problem solving
- Develop strong links with all Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) through a regional structure to tackle Organised Crime Groups (OCG) causing significant harm to wildlife
- Increase awareness via partners, the public and law enforcement agencies
- Identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation and work with partners to provide meaningful change
- Increase intelligence sharing between stakeholders with a focus on quality
- Coordinate a national and international cross border response to wildlife crime

5.2.1 The Poaching Priority Delivery Group has previously fallen under the governance of the wildlife crime portfolio. However, due to the cross-over between the animal welfare issues and the associated violence, antisocial behaviour, threats, gambling, and damage that comes with crimes like hare coursing, fish and deer poaching; this Group will now sit as a priority with both wildlife crime and the rural affairs strategies.

5.3 Organisational Wildlife Crime Priorities

5.3.1 Findings from partner and police consultation demonstrated the need for a coordinated approach nationally with clear governance arrangements to develop, consult, approve, and manage initiatives and overall service delivery. A service specification was drawn up (see Diagram 2) that captures the main inputs and objectives of this portfolio.

5.3.2 Accordingly, the first steps are to:

- Establish senior officer leads for all police forces in tackling wildlife crime and raising internal police awareness
- Continue to develop the briefing notes available on the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) to assist investigators and call handlers
- Train and develop the understanding of wildlife crime for members of the Crown Prosecution Service and courts to improve convictions and deliver proportionate sentencing
- Focus on online and dark-web wildlife crime
- Widen the number of recordable wildlife crimes so as to better understand and reflect the range and scale of the portfolio
- Develop academic engagement
- Secure future funding for NWCU and dedicated PWCOs
- Seek accreditation for national training for PWCOs from the College of Policing
- Develop a clear communication plan
- Strengthen approach to tackling Organised Crime Groups

## 6. Summary

- 6.1 The Wildlife Crime Strategy 2018-21 will be over-seen through a portfolio structure and will develop incrementally to achieve synthesis with allied work such as the Rural Affairs Strategy and the aims of partner organisations. The outcomes of this strategy will reflect the key work needed to safeguard our wildlife. Police will work with key partners UK wide to address key and emerging issues. The strategy aims to raise the profile of wildlife crime and encourage investment, as well as focus on service standards, accredited training and delivery. Consultation and communications will be tailored to the appropriate audiences to be fully inclusive and reap the most beneficial responses for the improvement of services.
- 6.2 Progress will be reported through the infrastructure arrangements and through the bi-annual NPCC Wildlife Crime & Rural Affairs e-newsletter.



# Wildlife Crime & Rural Affairs Priority Delivery Groups



BADGER  
PERSECUTION



BAT  
PERSECUTION



“CITES”



FRESHWATER PEARL  
MUSSELS



RAPTOR  
PERSECUTION



POACHING



FARM MACHINERY, PLANT  
& VEHICLE THEFT



LIVESTOCK  
OFFENCES



FUEL THEFT

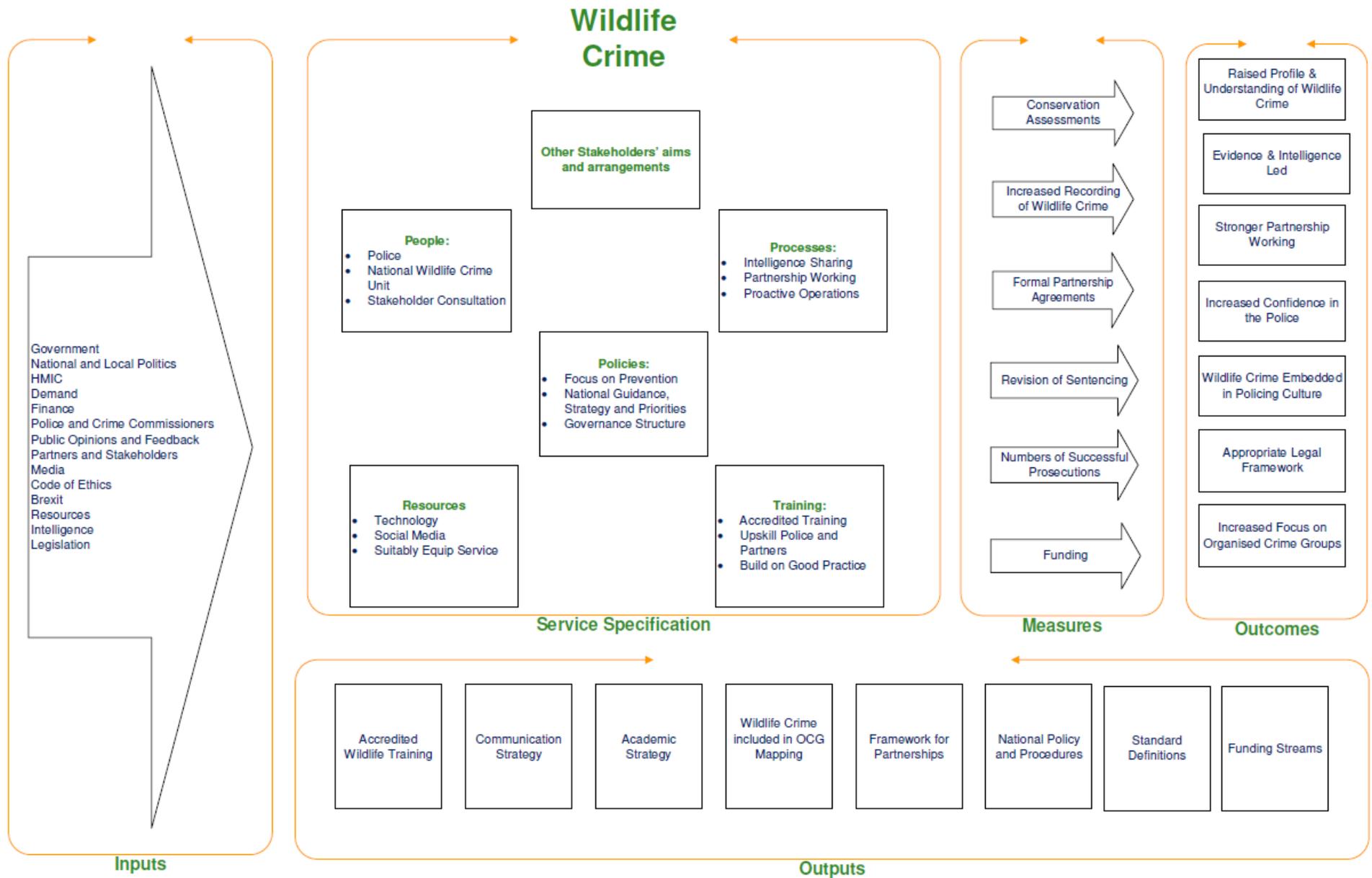


EQUINE CRIME



FLY TIPPING

# SERVICE SPECIFICATION





**PRODUCED BY:**

NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE  
NORTHALLERTON, MARCH 2018