

# RURAL CRIME STRATEGY

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## 2022-2025

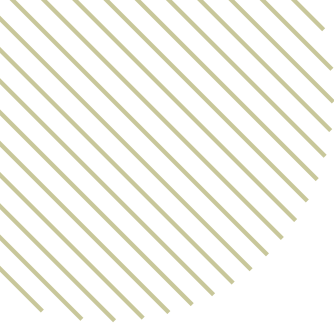


**SPARC**

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

COM-PÀIRTEACHAS ALBANNACH AN-AGHAIDH EUCOIR DÙTHCHAIL





# SPARC

## MEMBERS



# WELCOME

# FÀILTE

**It is hard to believe that three years have already passed since the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) devised and produced what was Scotland's first Rural Crime Strategy about preventing, reducing and tackling rural crime.**

Every partner has been humbled, inspired and motivated by the enthusiasm, support and willingness from individuals, agencies and organisations across the public, private and third sector who contributed, embraced and understood what the strategy was trying to achieve coupled with importantly, why it was needed.

Visibility has been key in providing a cohesive, coordinated and focused approach. Through effective partnerships, this proactivity has successfully driven activity to reduce opportunities for those crimes and offences that cause the greatest threat, risk or harm to our rural communities and environments.

Despite severe social and economic disruption triggered by the COVID 19 global pandemic, SPARC still progressed and supported numerous pieces of work plus collectively, we are in a stronger place than when the strategy was first launched.

Looking forward, we acknowledge there are huge challenges ahead plus believe the cost, scale, social impacts and other effects of crime, incidents and offences remain under reported.

By having established processes and built an accurate and detailed picture of the culprits involved in rural crime, SPARC recognises the scale of what we are seeking to overcome.

We will continue to target criminality including Serious Organised Crime Groups (SOCGs), seeking to deter, disrupt, pursue and prosecute the perpetrators at every opportunity.

Over the course of this strategy, SPARC will encourage, implement and promote creative, holistic, innovative tactics and techniques designed to prevent and reduce opportunities for criminality.



As part of our focus on changing perceptions and providing reassurance, we will highlight good news stories and tangible impacts which are making differences to **YOUR** community.

A sincere thank you to everyone who joined us in our work to make Scotland a hostile environment for criminality.

Over the life cycle of this, our second Rural Crime Strategy for Scotland, our commitment to you is that we will further our desire, efforts and collective energy in order to prevent, reduce and tackle rural crime.



# WHAT IS RURAL CRIME

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**

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

It is acknowledged particular challenges exist in target hardening and/or tackling criminality, particularly when a crime is reported as on-going coupled 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.

SPARC has developed accurate and evolving analytical data reflecting the varying crime trends and types that impact with greatest significance on rural communities plus the data has also assisted in our ability to identify potentially vulnerable areas.

This subsequently drives activity designed to encourage prevention, gain intelligence plus enable enforcement which will in turn increase reassurance.

**Our key operational priorities for the next three years will once again focus on:**

- **AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY MACHINERY, PLANT AND QUAD BIKE/ATV THEFT** 
- **EQUESTRIAN INCIDENTS** 
- **FLYTIPPING** 
- **FUEL AND TIMBER THEFT** 
- **HERITAGE CRIME** 
- **LIVESTOCK OFFENCES** 
- **HARE COURISING** 

**Through possessing a clearer picture of rural crime, SPARC has an opportunity to focus on preventing and reducing rural crime and offences in frequently targeted areas.**

This alignment has been strengthened through existing and new local Partnership Against Rural Crime groups (PARCs) across the country, particularly as criminality recognise no borders.

Regardless of any national, regional, local authority or policing boundaries, by developing, maintaining and/or enhancing local PARCs, the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently across these invisible borders has been forged.

SPARC recognises the evolution of crime by targeting those responsible in equal measure with crime prevention, we can break the circle.

A key aspect in doing this has been the advancement of Rural Watch Scotland, delivered by Neighbourhood Watch Scotland and a product of SPARC, aimed specifically at rural communities of Scotland.

Reducing crime and the fear of crime by providing the right information, to the right people, at the right time whilst encouraging everyone to think about safety and security for themselves, their neighbours and their community is important.

Signing up to receive free alerts and advice by email, text or phone to keep you informed, the Rural Watch Scotland ALERT platform has helped prevent crime, keep communities and residents safe plus due to continual responses, alerts have helped law enforcement apprehend criminals and be better prepared to disrupt activity.



# SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

SPARC is a multi-agency partnership involving key organisations collectively working together to prevent, reduce and tackle rural crime, particularly from the ever increasing threat posed by SOCGs throughout Scotland.

Providing strategic focus and an ethos of collective understanding, we are committed to listening plus acknowledging local and national concerns in order to reduce any perceived fear of crime whilst promoting a culture where individuals can prosper.

SPARC has and will continue to achieve this through providing practical crime prevention advice, driving and supporting intelligence gathering that may result in enforcement activity, all of which is underpinned through empowerment and reassurance.

To achieve these objectives we have and will continue to change perception, educate and raise awareness of rural crime coupled with the impact it can have on Scotland's rural communities and environment.

By enhancing public engagement and visibility, we will convey confidence any crime related issues affecting individuals living, working or enjoying these areas are taken seriously, acted upon and understood.



## VISION

**Regardless of geographic location, rural communities feel safe**



## AIM

**Protecting rural communities through strong partnerships**



## OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

**Promote and improve rural community and environmental wellbeing where people can flourish and feel safe**

Over the past 3 years, despite the unprecedented times caused through the COVID-19 global pandemic, SPARC was able to drive activity plus make tangible progress to help prevent, reduce and tackle rural crime across Scotland. Some of our key successes include:



Launched **Scotland's first Rural Crime strategy** with a clear vision that regardless of geographic location, rural communities feel safe.



Launched the **Scottish Heritage Crime Group** with a strategic aim of reducing the damage, impact and cost of cultural property and heritage crime throughout Scotland.



Working in conjunction with Valtra and Hamilton Ross Group who loaned a tractor and Rough Terrain Vehicle to SPARC, **raised awareness of rural crime by attending 49 agricultural events and shows** leaving a footprint in all 13 territorial policing divisions and 23 local authority areas.



**During the lifespan of the strategy, two Parliamentary Motions:** Motion S5M-8463 and S6M-03228 were lodged and received cross party support welcoming the "trailblazing work of SPARC in raising awareness of rural crime" plus on-going work to tackle the rise in heritage crime "taking action against these illegal activities to the full extent of the law".



Instigated '**Operation Hawkeye**' in partnership with Northumbria Police, Cumbria and Durham Constabularies to disrupt and detect serious organised crime groups involved in cross border rural crime.



Working with key partners, in particular the Binn Group, sought to **raise awareness on the blight of flytipping** plus positively debated and supported the need for flytipping to be elevated to equal place within Scotland's new Litter and Flytipping strategy.



Was a strong advocate in supporting a proposed **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Scotland) Bill** which sought to update the 1953 Act and after over 3 years from first being tabled successfully became law under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021.

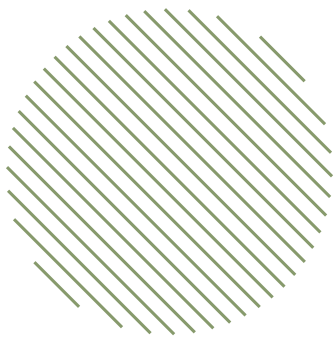


**SPARC named "Best Team"** at a UK Combined Industries Theft Solutions

Conference with award given to acknowledge SPARCs work developing and driving a holistic, inclusive and sustainable approach which included reducing threats from organised crime groups as well as promoting appropriate and effective crime prevention techniques.



**Hosted a delegation** from senior Garda officers plus principal representatives from the agricultural industry in Ireland and Northern Ireland who due to the perceived success of the SPARC model were keen to examine the processes and structures involved with an intention of implementing a similar initiative into Ireland. During their visit, Scottish Government Community Safety Minister and her officials strongly endorsed SPARC activity, whilst encouraging adoption of the partnership model.



## DEFINING RURAL SCOTLAND

**The term rural generally refers to areas which are geographically located outside cities and towns, have limited habitation and open space with an economic framework which reflects the land use, i.e. agriculture, forestry, food and drink growth and production, service industry or tourism.**

The Scottish Government "Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021" publication states 98% of Scotland's land mass is classified as rural with currently 17% of the country's population residing there. However due to increased accessibility, the population of rural areas is growing at a faster rate than in the rest of Scotland.

Rural Scotland is defined as settlements with a population of less than 3,000 and a settlement being defined to be a group of high density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. Rural Scotland can then

be further split into Accessible Rural: those with a less than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more which accounts for 28% of Scotland's land mass plus Remote Rural: those with a greater than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more which accounts for 70% of Scotland's land mass.

Exceptions will always exist and it is important that any village and/or smaller town communities located on the periphery of Scotland's larger cities and towns are not overlooked.

## ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

**With this strategy, our intention is to build on the solid foundations and tangible success achieved over the life cycle of the previous strategy.**

SPARC will continue to lead by example and be at the forefront of galvanising all our national and local partners to deliver everything outlined in this strategy with renewed focus and vigour.

Consistency of approach is vital and when reflecting back over the past three years, it has been acknowledged that the vision, aim and objectives initially devised have proved to be applicable, tangible and transferable throughout the country as indeed have the seven key priorities and associated Action Plans.

Evidence, facts and figures have supported these as an accurate reflection of the main incidents, crimes and offences occurring.

Over the course of this strategy, SPARC will once again continue to drive activity designed to prevent, reduce and tackle anyone wanting to make money at the expense of hard working, law abiding people thus threatening the very fabric of our rural communities and environments.

Collectively SPARC stressed the need for everyone living, working or visiting rural communities and environments to report any criminal activity or incidents, as only by gaining an understanding of what was actually going on, would SPARC be able to drive a cohesive, focussed and targeted response designed to tackle sources rather than symptoms.

A vital component to achieving the above statement has been the consistent coordination through establishing new, plus enhancing, maintaining and strengthening existing local PARCs across Scotland.

Ensuring a two way flow of regular information, resources and support aligned under the national strategy structure, local PARCs, driven by the commitment and support of everyone involved on them, have provided a dynamic and motivated platform.

These have bridged the link for raising awareness and promoting the national focus coupled with identifying, raising awareness and taking action to resolve any issues identified locally.



**98% of  
Scotland's  
land mass  
is classified  
as rural**



**If accessing Scotland's outdoors:**

- Respect the principles of other people.
- Care for the environment.
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot)



# ORGANISED CRIME PROVING THE LINK



**Who is YOUR neighbour? Unfortunately it was not difficult to evidence the involvement of SOCGs behind a significant percentage of rural crimes that occurred throughout Scotland plus their links to local gangs and transient criminals. We also know many own farm properties and live within rural communities.**

Encouragingly, there has been a significant increase in information, knowledge and understanding, resulting in a more accurate and integrated picture on these individuals, gangs and groups. This has and will continue to result in disruption to their criminal activity and increase the chances of them being apprehended and imprisoned!

## **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

Criminals make money at the expense of hard working, law abiding people through undermining legitimate business and threatening the fabric of communities and increasingly more and more SOCGs are diversifying with two thirds of all known groups involved in multiple crime types.

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

**Rural communities and environments are often perceived as soft and vulnerable targets that will afford ample opportunity for SOCGs who believe they can go about their criminal activity undetected.**

**This is not the case! SPARC and all our partners will continue to root them out plus we recognise to have the greatest opportunity for success in disrupting criminality, if everyone plays their part and work together to reduce the harm they try and cause to our communities.**

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.

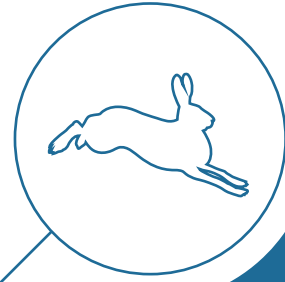
Driven by SPARC, Police Scotland and several English counterparts have formed 'Operation Hawkeye' specifically targeting transient criminals in cross border rural crime. This has developed from evidence that a high percentage of those committing rural crime in Scotland originate from the North of England.

Through coordinating effective and pro-active partnerships, 'Operation Hawkeye' seeks to strengthen cross border working and reduce opportunities for those individuals intent on causing the greatest threat, risk or harm to rural communities on both sides of the Border.

SPARC is also mindful that following the EU exit and no physical controls at the Ireland/UK border, it is almost certain that the Irish land border and Common Travel Area routes to mainland UK will cause concern. Work has already begun to develop strong working relationships with colleagues in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

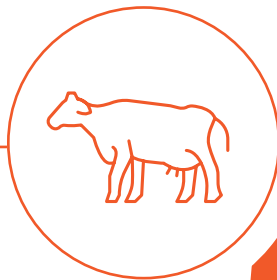


## Hare Coursing



- Associated criminality such as anti-social behaviour, intimidation and violence
- Support National Wildlife Crime Unit and Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Unit

## Livestock Offences



- Livestock theft
- Livestock attacks and worrying
- Securing the integrity and safety of food supply chain

## Heritage Crime



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

- Domestic - p rural location
- Commercial - agricultural a
- Theft of timber operational s hauliers

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# SEVEN RURAL CRIMINAL PRIORITIES



## Agricultural and Forestry Machinery, Plant and Quad Bike/ATV Theft

- Plant theft
- Farm and forestry machinery
- Quad bike/All-terrain vehicles
- Farm and forestry business consumables



## Equestrian Incidents

- Horse, tack and trailer theft
- Horse interference
- Safe and responsible access to the countryside
- Equine Road Safety



## Flytipping

- Household and commercial waste
- Waste through organised crime
- Dirty camping

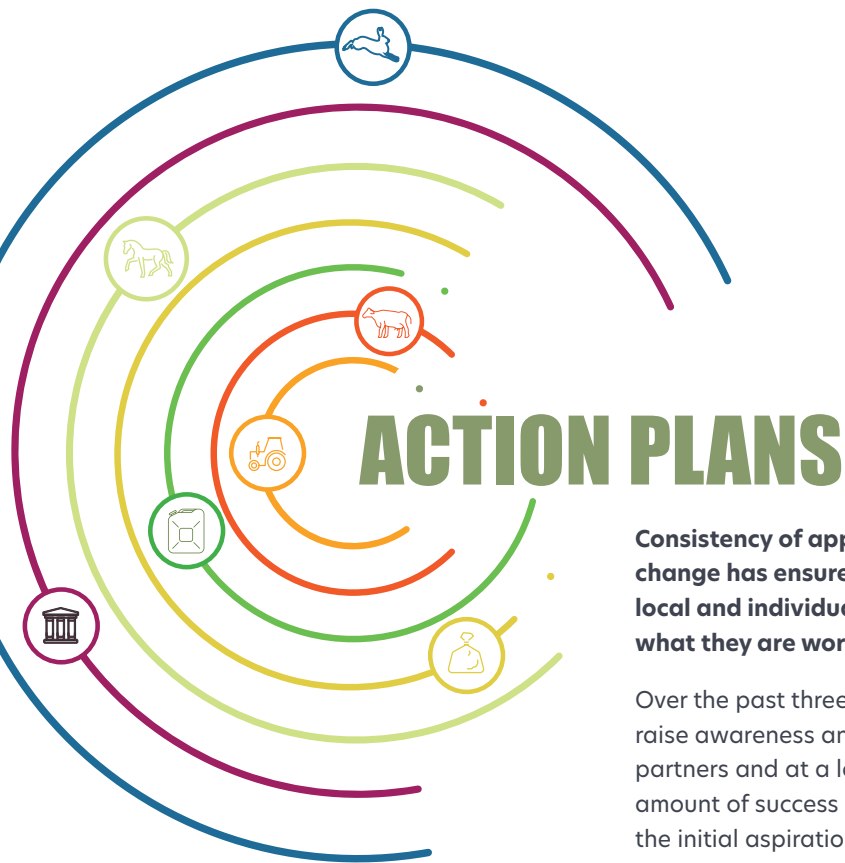
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## Fuel & Timber Theft



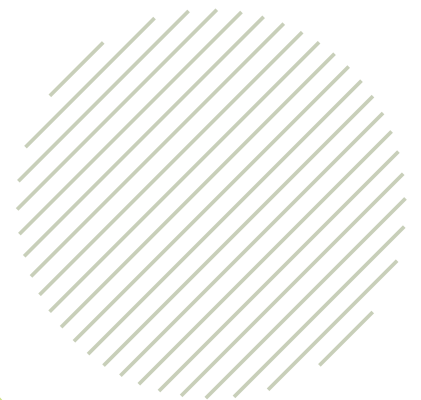
## ACTION PLANS

**Consistency of approach in order to make sustained and tangible change has ensured over time there is clear direction at a national, local and individual level where everyone is collectively focussed on what they are working towards.**

Over the past three years, SPARC has worked tirelessly to build momentum, raise awareness and understanding of each Action Plan with national partners and at a local level through local PARCs. Reflecting on the amount of success achieved by each Plan, it is encouraging to see many of the initial aspirations and what we hoped to achieve, coming to fruition.

This has undoubtedly resulted in SPARC gaining credibility plus being perceived as a partnership that delivers positive change, listens to issues identified by those individuals living, working and enjoying Scotland's rural communities and environments then seeks to solve them by tackling the source and not merely the symptoms.

We have revisited, refreshed and tweaked the Action Plans to ensure they continue reflecting current changes or trends so over the next three years SPARC can evidence examples of improvement, progression and success.



## Agricultural and Forestry Machinery, Plant and Quad Bike/ATV Theft: SPARC Lead - Police Scotland

Essential for operating businesses and supporting livelihoods, the theft of vital agricultural and forestry machinery, plant and quad bike/ATVs can have a devastating impact. Compounded by global supply chain delays, Brexit and COVID have made the targeting of these commodities very lucrative and worth the seemingly high risk involved to steal them.



WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Disrupt criminality using rural road networks to move across national and local borders.	Build local and national Intelligence profiles of those involved in theft through technologies such as ANPR and 'Operation Hawkeye'.  Coordinate multi-agency operational deployments plus increase use of Rural Watch to detect and intercept suspect vehicles.	Increase information relating to routes and vehicles utilised by criminals.  Reduction in criminality utilising rural road network.	Short Term
Reduce opportunities for criminality to steal agricultural and forestry machinery, plant and quad bikes/ATVs.	Identify, promote and encourage the use of crime prevention products and technologies, including protective marking and tracking devices.  Raise awareness to embed a crime prevention skill set within businesses and contractors.	Uptake in protective marking schemes.  Crime prevention training delivery.	Medium Term
Particularly in rural locations, target harden assets by strengthening prevention tactics and techniques.	Identify vulnerable sites (temporary and permanent) and provide early prevention interventions in conjunction with partners.  Share examples of good practice plus publicise successful convictions to deter others with a criminal mind-set and demonstrate confidence in the legal processes.	Reduction in financial or commercial losses.	Long Term

## Equestrian Incidents: SPARC Lead – British Horse Society

Theft of horses, tack, horseboxes and trailers plus alarming trends of horse interference whether malicious or well-intentioned, means owners and riders need to be vigilant and take necessary prevention steps. With horses and riders among the most vulnerable groups of road users, focus on reducing serious road traffic accidents is also a key priority.



WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Equine road safety.	Promote campaigns addressing road safety encouraging the reporting of incidents and 'near misses' on the public highway.  Promote Operation 'Lose the Blinkers' initiative throughout Scotland.  Encourage 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 use of Horse I app.  Provide guidance on and enforce safe vehicle transportation by owners plus implement large animal rescue preventions and improvements.	Observe marked reduction in equestrian incidents and accidents on the public highway.  More educated drivers, passing vulnerable road users wide and slow at 10 mph.  Fewer accidents involving animal transport seen on Scotland's roads.	Short Term
Less horse related theft including animals, tack, stable and transportation equipment.	Integrate a crime prevention philosophy into equestrian businesses and for all BHS professional coaches.  Develop equine crime toolkits supporting prevention and investigation plus develop stronger links with Rural Watch.  Disrupt the market for stolen equine equipment and encourage reporting of suspicious activity around equine facilities plus early reporting of horse interference.	Uptake in protective marking schemes.  Crime prevention training delivery.	Medium Term
Safe horse riding access to the countryside.	Identify vulnerable sites (temporary and permanent) plus provide early prevention interventions in conjunction with partners.  Share examples of good practice, encourage multi-use access, take account of all non-motorised users of paths and tracks.	Harmonious shared use of Scotland's paths.  Educated dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders.  Police Scotland work with partners to maintain harmony.	Long Term

### Flytipping: SPARC Lead – Zero Waste Scotland

The illegal depositing of any waste onto land that has no licence to accept it blights our rural environments, puts the health and wellbeing of communities at risk plus can affect wildlife, damage soil quality and watercourses.



WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
To understand the behaviours that lead to flytipping so targeted approaches can be developed.	Conduct research to understand the influences that result in flytipping behaviour and the problems that this causes across various contexts and audience groups and use this to design effective policy interventions.	Development of research outputs that will underpin behaviour change interventions.  Private land owners have support to deter and deal with flytipping.	Short Term
Develop and adopt a shared approach between stakeholders to flytipping prevention and behaviour change across Scotland.	Deliver a national anti-flytipping campaign consistently and collaboratively across Scotland.  Create a single information point containing advice on commonly flytipped materials.	Development of a more effective enforcement model. National anti-flytipping campaign delivered successfully. Single point for information is well used.	Medium Term
Improve understanding of the sources, levels and composition of flytipping as well as geospatial and temporal patterns associated with flytipping.	Data sharing agreement to support the gathering of data and to improve the consistency of data collected.  Development of a live picture of flytipping across public and private land in Scotland.	Data sharing agreement developed. Increased flytipping data reporting by local authorities and other duty bodies. Completion of a pilot project examining flytipping reporting options for private land owners and managers.	Long Term

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

The theft of fuel in rural locations not only deprives the owner of the fuel but has a significant consequential impact on the ability of businesses and commercial activities to operate, compounding the loss. Illegal felling and theft of cut timber leads to loss of revenue and biodiversity damage.



WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Make fuel and timber more difficult to steal from peri-urban and rural locations.	Raise awareness of up-to-date security methods and products.  Share and encourage proven housekeeping and prevention tactics and techniques.	Reduction in fuel and timber theft. Evidence of unsuccessful attempts, less damage and increased prevention measures.	Short Term
Create agricultural, forestry & 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. Produce preventative guidance and 'top tips' designed to reduce opportunities for criminality.	Reduction in theft or attempted theft. Increased perception that agricultural, forestry and rural environments are hostile environments for criminality.	Medium Term
Raise confidence in reporting suspicious activity resulting in tangible action and support 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'.  Develop and share 'How to report' guides and support these through internal and external campaigns.	Increased recording and reporting of crimes, incidents and offences from landowners, property owners and contractors.  Positive feedback and changing perception from landowners and contractors.	Long Term

## Heritage Crime: SPARC Lead – Historic Environment Scotland

Heritage crime robs us not just of our history but can impact significantly on communities not just in monetary value but social costs as any damage caused denies future generations the opportunity to enjoy our rich collection of unique sites. It is the responsibility of us all to protect Scotland's heritage from those who would wish to degrade and harm it.



WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Prevent, reduce and tackle incidents of illegal metal detecting.	<p>Awareness raising campaigns such as Crimestoppers plus increased visibility of the Treasure Trove Unit and Scottish Heritage Crime Group.</p> <p>Pro-active and reactive responses to local and regional incidents.</p> <p>Educate policing and other enforcement bodies on recognising damaged sites, gathering evidence and joint collaboration on investigation and detection.</p>	<p>Increased reporting of incidents.</p> <p>Intelligence led prevention tactics.</p> <p>Increased engagement through Treasure Trove Unit Outreach Programme.</p>	Short Term
Reducing vulnerability of historic sites from crimes, incidents and offences.	<p>Create accessible and current knowledge of heritage locations and their vulnerabilities within partner agencies plus produce information &amp; assistance guides/literature.</p> <p>Improve protective security measures and work with partners to design and implement early intervention strategies .</p> <p>Influence local authorities and landowners to protect heritage sites located on their land.</p>	<p>Reduction in number of crimes, incidents and offences recorded on historic sites.</p> <p>Increase in detection, enforcement and prosecution cases.</p>	Medium Term
Strengthen importance and raise profile of protecting and preserving heritage sites.	<p>Establish an online presence to support local authorities, police and communities to understand range of heritage assets in their jurisdiction.</p> <p>Encourage greater protection and oversight of heritage assets.</p>	<p>Cohesive and coordinated sharing of knowledge amongst partners.</p> <p>Enhanced stewardship of Scotland's heritage.</p>	Long Term



**Reducing vulnerability of historic sites from crimes, incidents and offences.**

### Livestock Crimes: SPARC Lead – National Farmers Union (Scotland)



Attacks and worrying on livestock is an emotive but all too common issue as is livestock theft. Both can have a devastating impact for owners and their businesses as well as causing unnecessary suffering to the animals. Consumers should have confidence that their food is authentic and safe which is why this is also a focus.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Reduce instances of livestock attacks and worrying caused by dogs.	Raise awareness of the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021. Coordinate local and national campaigns focusing on consequential outcomes plus publicise any successful prosecutions.	Reduction in incidents of livestock attacks and worrying. Increase in reporting of livestock attacks and worrying incidents.	Short Term
Prevention, reduction and tackling of livestock theft.	Promote benefits of accurate record keeping, stock marking and use of livestock tracing systems. Regular checking, counting and supervision of stock. Encourage maintenance and repairing where required of gates, boundary fencing and walls.	Reduction in incidents of livestock theft.	Medium Term
Prevent the illegal entry of animal products into the Scottish food chain.	Work with and support the activities of Food Standards Scotland. 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. Create hostile environments within the food producing, manufacturing and retail sector for any individuals or groups intent on illegal activities.	Increased intelligence followed by successful prosecutions. Ensuring integrity of food supply chain from farming industry and primary producers is authentic and safe.	Long Term

### Hare Coursing: SPARC Lead – Scottish Land & Estates



Hare Coursing is a barbaric and illegal activity where dogs are used to chase, catch and kill hares. As well as being an issue of animal welfare, persons involved in hare coursing are often committing other criminal activities including intimidation, theft and violence plus can cause significant disturbance in the countryside and are a cause of serious concern to those who live in rural communities.

WHAT WE WANT	HOW WE WILL DO THIS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	TIMESCALE
Make Hare Coursing a 'high risk activity' for those individuals engaging in this criminality.	Encourage public reporting. Increased awareness and training within all law enforcement communities on the response and enforcement pathway from initial report plus publish details of successful detection + prosecutions.	Increased detection, prosecutions and convictions.	Short Term
Raise profile of Hare Coursing as a serious problem and highlight consequences in terms of links to organised criminals.	Communicate to, and influence land owners and occupiers that they can have an important role in contributing to the prevention, disruption and tackling of Hare Coursing 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 in Scotland and Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Unit.	Endorse and participate in PAW (Scotland) campaigns. Forge links with and support the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Poaching Priority Delivery Group. Support Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Unit and territorial divisional Wildlife Crime Officers prevent, reduce and tackle Hare Coursing.	Wider campaign audiences. High profile days of action and multi-agency operations.	Long Term



# CHALLENGING TIMES

**There is no doubt that over the course of this strategy, Scotland's rural communities and environments will experience significant change from a number of factors.**

Some of these include land reform and in particular through scale and concentration of land ownership, community ownership and agricultural holdings, all of which will impact on landowners, tenants, businesses and communities. The way land is used will also change with a drive towards green industry and renewable technologies as Scotland seeks to deliver net zero ambitions. Onshore and offshore wind, hydro, solar, tidal and wave as well as green hydrogen and low carbon heat will push hard for huge growth as already demonstrated by the new offshore projects which came through the recent ScotWind Leasing process.

In addition to the above, pledges to plant 36 million trees in Scotland by 2030, much of which is with native trees like Scots pine, oak and birch, the price of timber is increasing at a pace greater than in recent years and currently there is not enough to satisfy demand, a situation not helped due to global shipping issues, insect infestations and weather.

Logistical and administrative difficulties relating to Brexit have further contributed to supply problems and price increases. When the transition period for the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union officially came to an end on 31st December 2020, a key aspect was allowing the UK freedom to design its own agricultural policy.

A devolved matter, Scotland will keep direct payments to farmers in place until the end of the next parliament with plans for a future agricultural bill, a national test programme plus encourage and support farmers to reduce agricultural emissions by 31% by 2032.

Correspondingly, the spiralling cost of living, escalating costs on essential commodities and consumables as diverse as fertiliser, food and fuel has the potential to place mounting pressures on household and business finances.

None of which will go undetected by those who wish to exploit opportunities to further their criminality plus make money at a time of change and diversification for much of Scotland's evolving communities and environments.



**By the end of this strategy life cycle, SPARC is focused on achieving:**

- **An overall reduction in rural crime throughout Scotland**
- **Increased reporting of rural crime, incidents and offences**
- **Increased arrests and convictions for individuals caught committing rural crime**
- **Resilient communities and environments where people feel safe**

**Help us achieve all of the above by contributing in whatever way possible.**

We need everyone - and that includes **YOU** - to make a positive change such as engaging with a local Partnership Against Rural Crime group, signing up to **Rural Watch Scotland ALERTS**, making that phone call when you observe a vehicle acting suspiciously or installing preventative measures, no matter how small.

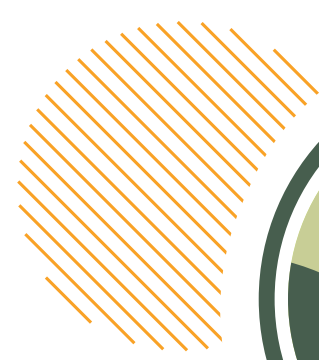
Together we will collectively prevent, reduce and tackle rural crime in Scotland, protect our rural communities through strong partnerships and ultimately ensure regardless of geographic location, rural communities feel safe!

Always dial **999** in an emergency, dial **101** for non-emergencies or go online to report incidents of a non-serious nature via [Contact Us Form](#)

If you know or suspect who is involved in rural crime contact the independent charity Crimestoppers who are 100% anonymous on **0800 555 111**

If you have any information or suspicions about potential food related crime, call the anonymous Scottish Food Crime Hotline on **0800 028 7926**

If reporting an incident and not sure where you are, remember Police Scotland Area Control Rooms accept the location sharing app **'What3Words'**



**THANK YOU TAPADH LEAT**





# SPARC

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

COM-PÀIRTEACHAS ALBANNACH AN-AGHAIDH EUCOIR DÙTHCHAIL

