



# The National Farmers' Union 2016 Police and Crime Commissioners Election Manifesto

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) were introduced in 2012 by the coalition government to replace the existing police authorities.

The PCC is responsible for setting the strategic direction and accountability for their area, and for setting strategic policing priorities as part of a five year Police & Crime Plan for their force area. They are responsible for the budget and for setting the level of precept from Council Tax, and so will have a strong influence on the resources available for policing. Additionally, in the future they may also be responsible for the fire and ambulance services.

The upcoming PCC elections present the NFU and its members with an opportunity to challenge candidates to make much needed commitments towards rural policing, and this publication helps identify the main issues facing rural communities and some solutions for them.

## Timeline

The final date for candidate nominations is 7 April 2016. The elections will be held on Thursday 5 May, with the new PCCs taking office on 12 May.

## How PCCs can help to tackle rural crime

There are a number of issues surrounding rural crime which the PCC will be able to address. Our main concerns and some workable solutions to them are listed below:

### A higher priority put towards tackling rural crime

**Our concern:** Rural crime is massively underreported, with the impact on people and businesses not fully appreciated or understood. Rural crime has been estimated to cost between £37.8 million (NFU Mutual) and £800 Million (National Rural Crime Network). Rural communities are given low priority in terms of resources and funding, despite being termed as vulnerable communities by many police forces. Police have a very low visibility, much reducing their deterrent role more often found in built up areas.

**The solution:** The PCC has the power to assign a higher proportion of resources towards rural areas. Alongside ensuring a consistent approach to crimes which occur in both rural and urban environments, such as vandalism and fly-tipping, this would increase police visibility and stop rural areas from being seen as 'easy-pickings' for criminals. Individual police forces should have a defined strategy and approach towards rural crime suitable for their region.

### Improved direct communications with police

**Our concern:** Much of the under reporting of rural crime is due to basic difficulties with communicating with the police. Inadequacies with the 101 system have contributed to a loss of confidence within rural communities, with many people giving up on the system entirely. This is compounded by poor phone and internet coverage which leads to the sense of isolation. Furthermore, police are not fully utilising the valuable knowledge of members of the rural community as fully as they could.

**The solution:** A commitment to reducing the waiting times associated with the 101 system would lead to much higher proportion of rural crime being reported. Alternative methods for reporting crimes, such as online and via apps etc. must be considered. Direct contacts within specialist rural task forces have proved an effective method for reporting crimes in the past, and a return to this approach would be advantageous. The continued support of Countryside watch schemes and other publicly supported initiatives is essential for tackling certain crimes.

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## Effective cross border policing

**Our concern:** A lack of coordination between neighbouring PCCs is leading to 'criminal tourism'. Particularly in the case of crimes such as hare coursing, action to control crime in one county inevitably leads to an increase in another. Furthermore, criminals are often travelling long distances to commit crimes, and so a combined force response is required for a positive outcome.

**The solution:** Better cross border communications, and combined operations would have a more effective impact on reducing crimes. More nationally focused or cross-border police operations, as opposed to regional ones, would help prevent crime migration.

## Better police training and structuring for dealing with and understanding rural crime

**Our concern:** There are concerns that officers dealing with incidences do not fully understand the costs and implications of the crimes committed. The seriousness and extent of some crimes for rural businesses and farms are widely misunderstood, often resulting in a low priority response and giving a sense of disinterest. The lack of dedicated rural police teams and officers greatly reduces the effectiveness of the police force.

**The solution:** Regular training sessions would give officers a clearer idea of livestock and machinery values, fly-grazing, agricultural terminology, and of the disruption caused by crime. Dedicated rural police teams and officers with specialist skills such as livestock handling would also be highly beneficial. The NFU already carries out training with some police forces, and is keen to continue and expand on this.

## A set definition for rural crime

**Our concern:** Some police forces still do not have a definition for rural crime, and those which do often differ from one another. Without a set definition it is difficult to get an accurate reflection of the true levels of rural crime.

**The solution:** Police forces need to ensure that they have a set definition for rural crime and also set targets based on this definition. Matching this definition to neighbouring regions where practical will give a much clearer picture of rural crime levels.

## Enforcement of existing laws and regulations

**Our Concern:** There are a number of crimes and anti-social behaviour which commonly affect our members. These include, but are by no means limited to: Hare Coursing, Fly-grazing, Fly-tipping, Livestock theft, Vehicle theft, Sheep worrying, Trespass, Poaching, Arson, Vandalism, and Fraud.

**The solution:** A basic commitment to ensuring that there is sufficient training and resources to enforce existing laws and regulations will ensure that crime levels do not escalate, and will give a much better perception of police effectiveness.

## Further Information

- **Association of Police and Crime Commissioners information:** <http://www.apccs.police.uk/home/2016-police-crime-commissioner-elections/>
- **About My Vote information on PCC elections:** <http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/upcoming-elections-and-referendums/police-and-crime-commissioners>
- **List of candidates:** <https://policinginsight.com/analysis/who-is-standing-in-the-pcc-elections-next-may/>

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