



# Rural Crime Strategy

2023 - 2026

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# Foreword

In Essex we have made protecting rural and isolated areas a key priority in the Police and Crime Plan 2021 – 2024, with the objective to work with rural communities to help them build greater resilience and make them more safe and secure for all.

In 2017, the last rural crime strategy set out an ambitious plan to tackle crime in rural communities and establish a Rural Engagement Team to support this aim. Since then, there has been continued investment in tackling rural crime, with Essex Police currently having one of the largest Rural Engagement Teams in the country.

By working with partners across Essex, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of rural crimes. Unauthorised encampments have gone down by 50%, hare coursing has seen a reduction of 10% and the theft of large machinery by 36%.

Essex has a large rural community that makes a huge contribution to our county. We already work well with our rural communities, but we want to make an even bigger difference to their safety and security by helping them build greater resilience, prioritise the crime that matters to them, support victims and protect the vulnerable. Most importantly, we want to prevent crime by building on the strength of rural communities to get crime down together.

We have also listened to our rural communities and know they want even more visible policing as this helps them feel safe and reassured. It is also important that police engage with them so that they feel connected

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rather than isolated. We need to develop better ways to strengthen communication and improve the flow of intelligence, so our communities feel confident in reporting crime and in knowing they will get an effective response in return.

We believe this updated Rural Crime Strategy will continue to develop and deliver on these commitments through a proven partnership approach that will help prevent crime from happening in the first place, reduce vulnerability, and make our rural communities safer and more secure for all.



**Police, Fire and Crime  
Commissioner, Roger Hirst**



**Chief Constable,  
BJ Harrington, QPM**



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## **Our Vision for Essex**

To work together  
to create safe, secure,  
and resilient rural  
communities.



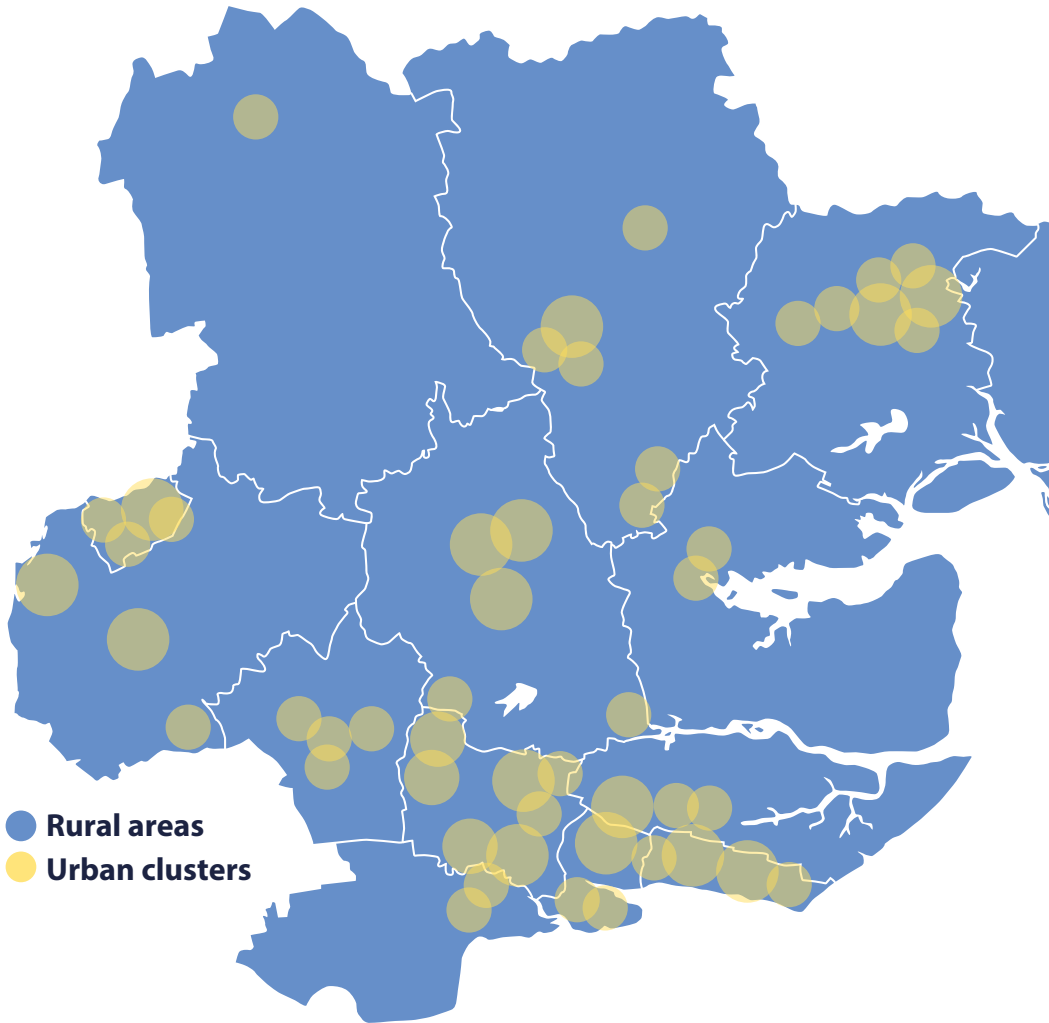
## Our Aim

To prevent crime and reduce vulnerability in rural communities.

## Our Objectives

- To reduce crime in rural communities.
- To increase the reporting of crime in rural communities.
- To increase the confidence of rural communities.
- To reduce vulnerability and build increased resilience within isolated rural communities.
- Support the victims of crime and prevent crime from happening.

**14% of all crime in Essex  
is rural crime  
(23,353 offences)**



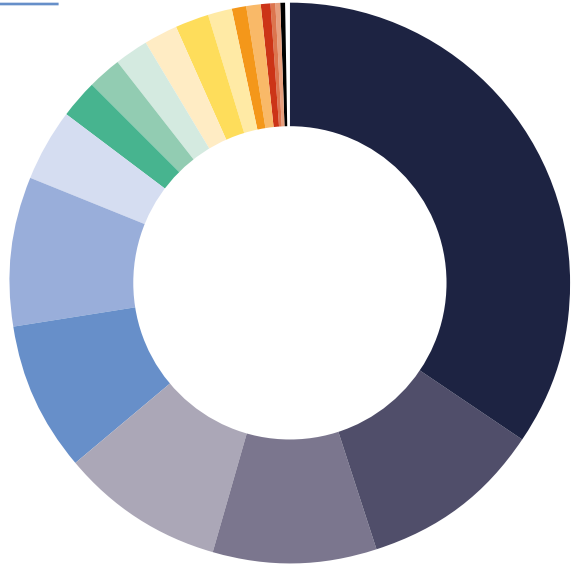
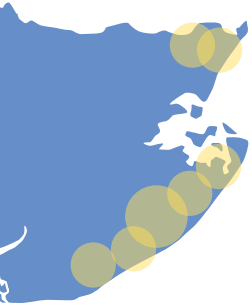
- Rural areas**
- Urban clusters**





**Rural crime:** Any crime committed in a rural location, or where the victim is specifically targeted because of their connection to, or involvement in, the rural community, economy, or area.

## Crime in rural areas



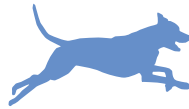
■ Violence without injury	34.5%	■ Burglary - business and community	1.8%
■ Public order offences	10.8%	■ Rape	1.6%
■ Violence with injury	9.4%	■ Arson	0.8%
■ Criminal damage	9.3%	■ Possession of weapons offences	0.7%
■ All other theft offences	8.7%	■ Trafficking of drugs	0.5%
■ Vehicle offences	8.7%	■ Theft from the person	0.4%
■ Burglary - residential	4.0%	■ Robbery - personal	0.4%
■ Misc crimes against society	2.2%	■ Bicycle theft	0.3%
■ Other sexual offences	2.1%	■ Robbery - business	0%
■ Shoplifting	2.0%	■ Homicide	0%
■ Possession of drugs	1.9%		



**19.1% of rural crime was domestic abuse related**

**Rural crime has decreased by 2.4% since 2019**

**361 incidents of hare coursing in the 12 months leading to June 2022, compared to 401 in the same period in 2019**



**361 plant thefts were recorded in the 12 months leading to June 2022, compared to 561 reports in the same period in 2019**



**88 unauthorised encampments were recorded in the 12 months leading to June 2022, compared to 179 reports in the same period in 2019**

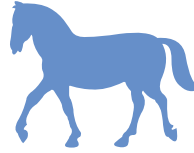
**40.6%**  
**of wildlife**  
**incidents are**  
**hare coursing**



**29.4%**  
**of wildlife**  
**incidents are**  
**trespass**



**27%**  
**of wildlife**  
**incidents are**  
**stray horses**



**3%**  
**of wildlife**  
**incidents are**  
**poaching**



**All have had year-on-year decrease**



**In the 12 months leading to June 2022, there has been a 10% decrease in hare coursing, compared to June 2019**

**In the 12 months leading to June 2022, there has been a 50% decrease in unauthorised encampments, compared to June 2019**

**In the 12 months leading to June 2022, there has been a 36% decrease in plant thefts compared to June 2019**

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# Prevention

**Our objective is to prevent crime from happening in the first place, to reduce overall crime and make our rural communities safe and prosperous places to live, work and visit.**

**We will:**

- Provide specialist crime prevention advice and support.
- Make further investment in fighting rural crimes, such as hare coursing, wildlife crime, heritage crime, fuel theft, unauthorised encampments, fly-tipping as well as theft of major plant machinery and equipment.
- Expand the new Tri-Service Rural Community Officer Pilot.
- Improve police visibility in rural communities and the local knowledge officers have of the communities they serve.
- Work through Safer Essex Roads Partnership to deliver Vision Zero.
- Work through Safer Essex Roads Partnership to invest more in improved speed cameras and Automatic Number Plate Recognition tracking in rural communities.
- Invest in technology such as drones to support rural crime prevention activity.
- Provide funding for rurally focused crime prevention and partnership activity through the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Crime Prevention Fund.
- Work with the Essex Community Foundation as a key funding partner to promote use of the High Sherriff's Fund to rural communities.



- Work with partners from Safer Essex to reduce the risk of speeding in rural communities, through prevention, education and enforcement.
- Work with Community Safety Partnerships to promote prevention advice and training, such as J9 Domestic Abuse training.
- Work with partners to improve suicide awareness, training for rural partners and support for vulnerable rural communities.

We will make our rural communities safer by preventing crime from happening in the first place and stop people from becoming victims of crime.

**ROGER HIRST**  
**POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME**  
**COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX**

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# Intelligence

**Our objective is to improve the flow of communication between police, partners and communities to better inform how we target offenders, pinpoint crime hotspots and identify emerging crime trends in rural areas.**

## **We will:**

- Encourage the reporting of rural crime by working with partners to promote ways to report crime and the positive impact this has on targeting offenders and crime hotspots.
- Develop better ways to communicate with communities and improve the flow of intelligence.
- Encourage reporting by providing efficient and timely feedback on actions taken.
- Work with local communities, partners, and neighbouring forces to identify emerging crime trends and/or crime hot spots, including areas of anti-social behaviour. Promote relevant prevention activities and undertake appropriate tactical activity.
- Build awareness and understanding of specific rural crime issues within Essex Police and partner organisations.
- Work with neighbouring forces to gather intelligence on cross border rural crime.
- Work with communities to understand the extent of dog theft from rural communities and promote preventative action that can help keep our pets safe.



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Police can't solve crime alone. Engagement with our rural communities is vital to the flow of intelligence that allows us to tackle crime effectively.

**TERRY BALDING**  
**CHIEF INSPECTOR, ESSEX POLICE**

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# Enforcement

**Our objective is to target rural crime through a range of collaborative measures to help identify the vulnerable, protect victims and tackle those who cause the greatest harm to our rural communities.**

**We will:**

- Continue to build our tactical responses in partnership with neighbouring forces to tackle regionally based crime such as hare coursing, fly-tipping, and wildlife crime.
- Work with specialist officers to support the victims of domestic abuse or those identified as vulnerable to becoming victims.
- Through Community Safety Partnerships identify local priorities and develop appropriate tactical responses, work together in Street Weeks and CSP Days of Action.
- Prevent and tackle domestic abuse and drug driven violence within rural communities across Essex.
- Support a cultural change within society to improve the safety of women and girls in rural communities.
- Promote the use of restorative justice as a way to reduce reoffending and help victims cope and recover.
- Utilise the increased powers within the Police, Courts, Sentencing and Crime Act to tackle hare coursing, illegal trespass and violent crime.





Ensuring an effective response to rural crime requires a cohesive, collaborative approach that prevents crime, enforces the law and targets criminality.

**BJ HARRINGTON**  
**CHIEF CONSTABLE QPM**

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# Reassurance

**Our objective is to work with partners and communities to provide more varied and effective ways to engage so rural communities feel confident in knowing they have a voice and that their concerns are acted on.**

**We will:**

- Grow the use of Farm Watch and Rural Watch.
- Work through Safer Essex Roads Partnership and with local communities to expand and promote Community Speed Watch.
- Making communities aware of actions taken on local crimes and issues.
- Improve communication channels to reach more rural and isolated communities, and ensure they have a strong voice in policing priorities.
- Work with partners to host and promote rural crime awareness days.
- Work with the Essex Rural Partnership to ensure rural communities are appropriately represented and benefit from a connected community. Providing a platform of support for essential development that focusses on the wellbeing and safety for all who live in Rural Essex.
- Increase the number of people volunteering in the Essex Police Special Constabulary and develop the Community Specials Programme to provide more flexible and localised ways for volunteers to support their



local communities.

- Work with Essex Association of Local Councils to engage with parish and town councils across Essex hear their views about rural crime, share prevention advice and provide updates on relevant activity.
- Work with partners to identify vulnerability and ensure appropriate referrals and support is provided.
- Work with partners to ensure that rural communities are involved in setting and delivering local community safety priorities.

“To provide more varied and effective ways to engage more frequently so residents in rural communities do not feel isolated, whilst feeling confident in knowing they have a voice and that their concerns are acted on.

**COUNCILLOR PETER DAVEY,  
CHAIRMAN OF ESSEX  
ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL  
COUNCILS**

“Effective two-way communication is key to giving rural communities confidence in their policing service.

**NICK SHUTTLEWORTH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
OF ESSEX**

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## Measures

- Confidence of rural community (SMSR Confidence Survey)
- Increased level of reporting (Crime Data Accuracy)
- Rural Community Engagement (attendance and reach)
- Measurement of specific rural crime types – hare coursing, unauthorised encampments, plant theft and wildlife offences



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# Linked Strategies

- Essex Rural Strategy 2023 - 2027 (in preparation)
- Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024
- Fire and Rescue Plan 2019-2024
- Force Plan 2022-2023
- Crime Prevention Strategy
- Southend Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board Strategic Plan
- Business Crime Strategy
- Essex Faith Covenant



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## Reporting rural crime

Hare coursing – call 999 if in progress. If reporting information you can do it online at [www.essex.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime](http://www.essex.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime) or call 101

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use Essex Police textphone service 18000 or text on 999 if you've pre-registered with the emergency SMS service.

Fly tipping – you should report fly tipping via your local council website [www.essex.gov.uk/contact-your-local-council](http://www.essex.gov.uk/contact-your-local-council)

You can report any crime anonymously at Crimestoppers  
[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)  
0800 555 111

Report an environmental incident  
[www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident](http://www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident)

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## Useful contacts

### **Your Local Community Policing Team**

[www.essex.police.uk/your-area](http://www.essex.police.uk/your-area)  
Tel 101

### **Rural Crime Advice**

[www.essex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rc/rural-crime](http://www.essex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rc/rural-crime)  
Tel 101

### **Your Local Essex Watch Liaison**

[www.essex.police.uk/police-forces/essex-police/areas/essex-police/au/about-us/essex-watch/](http://www.essex.police.uk/police-forces/essex-police/areas/essex-police/au/about-us/essex-watch/)  
Tel 101

### **Essex Rural Partnership**

[www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk](http://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk)  
01376 574 330

### **National Farmers Union (Essex)**

[www.nfuonline.com](http://www.nfuonline.com)  
01638 672100

### **Country Land and Business Association (CLA)**

[www.cla.org.uk](http://www.cla.org.uk)  
[east@cla.org.uk](mailto:east@cla.org.uk)  
0207 235 0511

### **Farming Community Network**

[www.fcn.org.uk](http://www.fcn.org.uk)  
Urgent: 03000 111 999  
Non-Urgent: 01788 510866

### **Victim Support**

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)  
0808 1689111

### **The Essex Association of Local Councils**

[www.ealc.gov.uk](http://www.ealc.gov.uk)  
01371 879722



📍 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
Kelvedon Park,  
London Road,  
Rivenhall,  
Witham,  
Essex CM8 3HB

🌐 [www.essex.pfcc.police.uk](http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk)

f. EssexPFCC

🐦 @EssexPFCC



📍 Essex Police Headquarters  
Sandford Road,  
Chelmsford,  
Essex CM2 6DN

🌐 [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)

f. EssexPoliceUK

🐦 @EssexPoliceUK



📍 Rural Community Council of Essex  
Threshfelds Business Park,  
Inworth Road, Feering  
Essex CO5 9SE

🌐 [www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk](http://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk)

f. essexruralpartnership

🐦 @EssexRP



📍 Essex Association of Local Councils,  
42B High Street, Great Dunmow,  
Essex CM6 1AH

🌐 [www.ealc.gov.uk](http://www.ealc.gov.uk)

f. EssexAssociation

🐦 @EALCnews