



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

WORKING WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 30 June 2017

Purpose of Report:

To update Members of the Community Safety Committee on the prevention work which is taking place within the rural communities of Nottinghamshire.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Daniel Quinn
Area Manager

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : daniel.quinn@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries
Contact :** Therese Easom
(0115) 967 0880 therese.easom@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire spans 834 square miles. Approximately 805,900 persons and over 80% of the county is classed as rural landscape. In 2016 Nottinghamshire Police saw an increase in rural crime of 1054 offences (12.1%) on the previous year.
- 1.2 The ambition to reduce rural crime was identified in the Safer Neighbourhood Boards (SNB) Strategic Risk Assessment (SRA) which highlighted rural crime as one of its thematic priorities for partners. The Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has also identified that rural crime is increasing and therefore collaboration and campaigns should continue to support the community's needs.
- 1.3 The scope of rural crime is varied and the impact is felt across the county. The Police and Crime Plan 2016-2018 details that Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood and rural villages in Mansfield, Rushcliffe and Gedling, predominantly impacted by rural crime.
- 1.4 Rural crime types include; theft and vandalism, off-roading, theft of 4x4s and quad bikes, crop damage, arson, hare coursing and poaching, as well as wildlife crime, heritage crime, this list is not exhaustive. Deliberate fire setting and other forms of rural crime often has a significant impact on rural communities. The impact of an incident on a farm for example, can resonate quickly across a small community and leave residents feeling vulnerable.
- 1.5 Farms are particularly at risk of deliberate fire setting activity. Most farms are in an isolated location with open boundaries, many storing readily ignitable materials such as hay and straw stacks, making them an easy target. A serious fire on a farm can affect the financial stability of even the most viable business. Over 40% of businesses that suffer a serious fire never trade successfully again. Within rural communities the wider impact, such as the sense of community wellbeing, impact on local jobs and the local economy is a factor.
- 1.6 In 2016 NFRS attended 72 agricultural fire incidents. It has been determined that 31 of these were started deliberately. Analysis of these incidents shows the most common months for agricultural fires to occur is August, followed by September and then July. This coincides with the harvest period which sees increased farming activity during the summer holiday period, which coincides with a higher footfall and recreational activity in rural areas. Analysis of data illustrates a correlation an increase in deliberate fire setting and school holiday periods.
- 1.7 When reviewing five year data, the most common district area for this type of incident to occur is Newark and Sherwood, followed by Bassetlaw. In 2016 the Mill Farm fire in Oxtun attracted a lot of public and media attention due to it being highly visible within the local community and close to a major road network.

- 1.8 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is committed to reducing not just fire related incidents within rural communities, but also working with partners to promote a broader community safety message which supports the wider crime prevention agenda.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 In 2016, to help embed the Service within the work of partners in supporting rural communities, NFRS took a seat on the Rural Crime Working Group (RCWG) and has been an active member since. Membership of this group has seen many benefits including increasing the efficiency of information sharing, access to shared resources and funding and enabling a collaborative approach to the delivery of community safety initiatives.
- 2.2 The Service has a dedicated lead on 'rural crime' which sits within the Prevention Department. This role is the designated single point of contact for partners and represents NFRS on the RCWG.
- 2.3 'Operation Bifocal' took place in May 2017 and is a successful example of how collaboration between Fire, Police, the National Farmers' Union (NFU), and the farming community itself, can have a positive effect in terms of community engagement and reassurance, delivering safety messages and targeting rural crime.
- 2.4 Operation Bifocal saw Fire and Police staff working together in a jointly staffed, high visibility vehicle, visiting targeted sites across the county, including farm owners, to offer advice and reassurance and offer valuable advice on arson reduction, security and storage of goods.
- 2.5 The concept of having a jointly staffed 'Rural Intervention Vehicle' (RIV) has been trialled in other fire and rescue services and was adopted within Nottinghamshire by way of following good practice for working within rural communities.
- 2.6 As a result of Operation Bifocal the learning and approach are also to be trialled jointly by NFRS and Nottinghamshire Police on 'Operation Decelerate' in the coming months. The intention of this operation is to conduct a safe and visible operation in intelligence led locations to attempt to reduce the number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) and therefore lower the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads in our county.
- 2.7 NFRS is also leading on an initiative, supported by partners within the RCWG, to deliver Rural Safety, 'Safety and Prevention' Folders to approximately 1000 farms across the county.
- 2.8 A multi-agency working group has been formed to help deliver this project. The folder will include safety advice, provided jointly by Fire, Police and the East Midlands Ambulance Service, to help the prevention of incidents and to provide practical advice on what to do in the event of an emergency. These

folders are to be delivered in person, jointly by agency representatives, to provide face-to-face engagement to maximise the delivery of the safety messages. Evaluation outcomes of this, and 'Operation Decelerate' will be brought back to Members in a future report.

- 2.9 Residents of rural communities often live in isolation so increased engagement within these communities provides an opportunity to find and help those in need of support, either directly or through signposting to other agencies. This will support the 'safe and well' programme which Members are aware of from previous reports.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The delivery of current and planned activities is contained within existing community safety budgets.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the purpose of this report is to provide a general update with regards to ongoing and planned community safety activities.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Policing and Crime Act 2017, Part 1 (emergency services collaboration) places a duty on the Fire Authority to work jointly to prevent rural crime.
- 6.2 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Service to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.
- 6.3 It is the expectation that the Service's engagement with rural communities and the promotion of safety messages will have a direct effect in the reduction of arson related incidents.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Part 2, Section 6, places a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities for the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and

death or injury by fire and to give information, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property and the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.

- 7.2 Both the National Police Chief's Council Roads Policing Strategy 2015-2020 and Fire Services Act, Part 2, Section 8, prioritises the reduction of road collisions and responding to road traffic collisions.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Effective fire investigation, community safety and collaboration measures not only support the Authority in discharging its statutory duties, but provide valuable support to partner agencies in discharging their duties. These activities fundamentally support the most vulnerable members of the communities.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Working within rural communities has seen much closer links formed with a number of partner agencies. This has seen a greater level of information sharing, and access to resources and funding.
- 9.2 All of the prevention campaigns delivered and planned involved partners from multiple agencies.
- 9.3 Progression of the dual agency, jointly staffed Rural Intervention Vehicle concept could be an opportunity for a fully collaborative approach in delivering community safety.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report and the on-going work and development of collaboration between Fire, Police and partners, targeting the safety of rural communities.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER