



**Sheffield &
Rotherham**

Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

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For nature, for everyone

Date: 15th August 2019

Dear Chief Constable Stephen Watson

Re: Tackling Wildlife Crime in South Yorkshire

Thank you for our meeting of 12th July, involving yourself, ACC David Hartley, CI Mark James, Supt Nick Lyall, Angela Smith MP, Mark Thomas RSPB and myself. As it is a month ago, I thought I would write to you setting out what I understand were the main points and actions agreed at the meeting and to ask you – is there any update on how these are being taken forward?

The key points we discussed and the actions as I noted down are below - of course, please let me know if I have missed anything:

To set the context for why we had requested the meeting, we referred to the Wildlife Crime Policing Strategy 2018-2021 and Supt Nick Lyall referred to the work of the Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group (RPPDG) and his appointment as Chair.

Angela Smith set out that we all fully recognised the overstretched and limited resources the police have, and that we are not expecting wildlife crime to become a South Yorkshire Police Priority over, for example, knife crime. However, we are seeking more parity as to how different aspects of rural crime are tackled across South Yorkshire. There is also the potential for a better-informed public to be better able to support the police.

I gave examples of the differences in the policing approach to certain incidents eg. Wyming Brook Nature Reserve on 19/2/2019 as opposed to the experience of our own members and the general public when they report in suspected wildlife crime. I cited some examples such as, 101 responders not knowing who the Wildlife Crime Officer was, or saying a wildlife crime was nothing to do with the police. Mark Thomas also raised the lack of progress in relation to several reported local wildlife crime incidents on the moors, even when evidence had been presented to them. For example, evidence such as forensic results on a raven found on Sheffield moorlands, which the RSPB determined at their own expense had been poisoned with the banned substance Aldicarb – a substance that is considered highly toxic to birds and honeybees, as well as having a very detrimental effect on human health – had not been





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followed up. Obviously it is a worrying development to see this poison being used on publicly accessible Sheffield moorlands near Langsett in the National Park.

Agreed Action: SY Police would review the specific incidents raised and respond to RSPB

Agreed Action: SY Police would review their approach & systems of handling wildlife crime reports

Agreed Action: Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT) will collect and provide specific examples where SY Police's response to a wildlife crime report has been poor to help support SY Police in making those systems improvements.

Agreed Action: SY Police would work with RSPB and SRWT to improve how wildlife crime information was fed in to Wildlife Crime Officers.

In discussing the incident on our Wyming Brook Nature Reserve, I mentioned that I had raised with SY officers the idea of a joint public event or evening whereby SY Police could share their knowledge about wildlife crime and how the public can actively and constructively help the police. However, officers only offered to observe an event at the Trust. However, you agreed that this type of event would be welcome and that this should be arranged. Nick Lyall also referred to the roll out of Operation Owl under the RPPDGs work.

Agreed Action: SY Police to get in contact with Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust about organising a joint public awareness raising event about how to recognise and report wildlife crime.

Mark and I raised the issue of public perception, as well as the perception from other police forces, that SY Police are not interested or active in tackling wildlife crime as there is a conflict of interest between the officers leading on wildlife crime and their personal involvement in the shooting industry. You responded that it was helpful for the police to have good community links with the shooting industry in order to be better able to tackle wildlife crime. A return to stronger community policing is planned in South Yorkshire and this will help the police in tackling crime across a range of areas, including wildlife crime.

I suggested that there was an opportunity for SY Police to change this perception and proactively engage in work to prevent local wildlife crime by, for example, rolling out *Operation Owl* and by joining the Derbyshire Police Force in raising awareness of birds of prey through projects such as *Upland Skies*.





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Agreed Action: SY Police to respond to the SRWT on whether they are willing to be involved in these projects.

In conclusion, you felt that SY Police were delivering strongly on wildlife crime, but perhaps there were some areas for improvement in relation to more public communication and reporting systems. I asked if you could share with me, and make public, some of your recent, successful wildlife crime prosecutions and your force's wildlife crime figures for, say the last 5 years, which you agreed to do.

Agreed Action: SY Police to share wildlife crime figures with the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

As we have had a number of enquiries from our members and the public about the meeting, I am sharing this letter publicly. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Liz Ballard, **Chief Executive**
Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust
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Mark Thomas, RSPB Head of Investigations

