



Rural Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Rural Forum held on Thursday 23 March 2023 in Via Video Conference, commencing at 5.00 pm and concluding at 6.20 pm.

Members present

S Adoh, D Carroll, L Clarke OBE, A Collingwood, I Hussain, M Hussain JP, D Johncock, J Jordan, N Marshall, N Thomas, A Turner and G Williams

Others in attendance

L Hornby, C Phillips and S Shah

Apologies

P Birchley, D Hayday, O Hayday and P Turner

Agenda Item

- 1 Welcome and Introduction by the Chairman**
The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
Deidre Hansen (Bradenham Parish Council)
Gail Hudson (Bucks officer)
Alex Nelms (Kensham Farms)
Chris Schmidt-Reid (Bucks officer)
Hannah Thynne (Bucks officer)
- 3 Rural Interests Present**
Victoria Beckwith (BCA)
John Bloomer (NFU)
Carole Burslem
Simon Cope
William Dallimore (Bucks Business First & Ngage)
Bryan Edgley (Kensham Farms)
Charlie Edgley
Hugh Ellerton
Andrew Garth
Ted Howard-Jones (Cholsey Grange Farm)
Cllr Charles Hussey (Hambleton Parish Council)

Neil Jackson (Chilterns AONB)
Liz Johncock
Simon Kearey
Bill Marshall
Hugh McCarthy
David Moore
Howard Mordue
John Sherlock
Rt. Hon. Greg Smith MP
Vicki Smith
Bob Uglow
Sue Wagner
Ian Waller (Farmer)
John Whitby

Presenters:

Emma Burroughs (Thames Valley Police)
Stuart Hutchings (Thames Valley Police)
David Kuttner (Thames Valley Police)
Emma Taylor (Thames Valley Police)

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were agreed as a true record.

5 Information Items

Rural Prosperity Fund Update

Claire Phillips provided an update to the Forum and the following points were noted:

- Buckinghamshire had been allocated £1.8 million of funding through this particular funding stream which is allocated over the next two years starting at the new financial year in April 2023.
- Capital grant funding would be put into small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in Bucks' rural areas over the two years.
- This would create new jobs and new business creation growth.
- Applications would be considered by a funding panel.
- The parameters, eligibility and proposed programme details were noted.
- There would be initial screening would be undertaken to ascertain whether the applicants were eligible for the funding.
- Support and guidance from the Council working alongside the BFF would be part of the process.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- Concerns were raised in terms of obtaining planning permission in time to

qualify within the deadlines set. It was noted that discussions were ongoing to try and alleviate these concerns. It was also noted that money would not be allocated unless planning permission was in place.

- There were no constraints on who could or could not apply for funding. However, it was noted that the time limit was less than when the LEADER programme was in place.
- Will Dallimore, of Bucks Business First/Ngage Solutions stated that if anyone had any questions, to contact him at william.dallimore@ngagesolutions.co.uk - 07802 411040.

Slides attached.

National Farmers Union (NFU)

John Bloomer updated the Forum which is attached.

Greg Smith, MP, reported that his Bill was progressing well and had now reached the Lords. The Bill was about forensic marking of farming machinery, at point of sale, particularly equipment such as quad bikes to make it easier for authorities to trace any seized stolen machinery back to their owners. Also that mobilizers be installed with unique keys. This would then bring insurance premiums down.

Due to the wording in the Bill, it would enable for measures to be expanded to other areas through secondary legislation meaning it would be applicable to GPS units, particularly on larger agricultural machinery, power tools etc. It would also help countless other trades such as plumbers, carpenters, builders etc.

Greg Smith also reported on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in that he had liaised with Michael Gove during the passage of the Levelling Up Bill in relation to the new NPPF which would now explicitly include details about land used for food production. This would give greater protections withing the planning system.

Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA)

Vicki Beckwith updated the Forum which is attached.

Bucks Council Update

The Chairman provided an update to the Forum, which included the following:

- An additional £5 million had been put into the budget to repair potholes across the county. This was on top of the £100 million already allocated.
- New trees were being planted with a commitment to planting 540,000 trees over 10 years. A site in Wing had been approved with Forestry England which would see 132,000 trees across 52 hectares of land and would include a community orchard.
- At Grange Farm in Hazlemere 14,900 trees were due to be planted as well as

- other sites across the county.
- The Household Support Fund which was a government fund was being used for the Council's own Helping Hands programme which had recently been extended to March 2024. It was noted that 22,000 calls had been received people with different cost of living issues. The Chairman noted that the One Can Trust was in receipt of donations of eggs from Lacey's Farm which linked in well with the rural community.
 - During the Coronation weekend in May, it was noted that all road closure fees were being waived for communities to come together and celebrate if they wished.

6 Presentations

Emma Burroughs, David Kuttner, Emma Taylor, Stuart Hutchins, Thames Valley Police (TVP).

Emma Burroughs stated that it was TVP's commitment to rural crime and that some success had taken place across the two police areas covered by TVP. Data sets for Aylesbury, Wycombe and South Bucks were shown which showed where the crime trends were, particularly looking at a specific definition for rural crime. It was noted that some figures were quite low which meant the figures were double checked to ensure accuracy. It was noted that there had been a reduction in business crime and burglaries due, it was believed, to better education of owners to take better preventative measures.

One area that had seen a stabilisation was hare coursing as well as in wildlife crime in the Aylesbury area.

David Kuttner introduced himself and explained that he was sergeant for the Aylesbury Vale area covering areas such as Buckingham, Waddesdon, Wing etc. and had seven PC's working with him as well as seven PCSO's although this number was due to increase due to recruitment.

David Kuttner stated that a popular tool for engagement with the public was a WhatsApp chat group which was run by the NFU and which TVP was a part of. Social media platforms were also popular, such as Facebook and Twitter as a means of posting about rural crime trends. A recent drive to encourage residents to sign up to the Thames Valley alerts had taken place. One officer who had joined the force came from a farming family and was therefore able to pass on her knowledge. Some PCSO's had been trained in tack marking for horse tack which was a service to be offered to horse owners.

Current challenges being faced were, among others, arable crime which was crime being seen across multiple counties and involved a group of criminals stealing from farms overnight, focussing mainly on caravans, trailers and tools. Offenders used unregistered vehicles or vehicles with false licence plates leaving it difficult for the police to trace and therefore bring the criminals to justice.

Hare and deer coursing tended to be concentrated in other neighbouring counties such as Bedfordshire although it was still an issue in Buckinghamshire. A joint operation between Bedfordshire Police, game keepers and TVP took place in 2022 which, it was hoped, would become a regular occurrence, but due to resourcing issues, this had not taken place again.

Operation Torby was an alliance with Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Police forces where resources were pooled together for one day to proactively police the county borders. However, once again, due to resourcing issues this had not taken place in the past sixteen months but it was hoped cross border operations would take place very soon.

Emma Burroughs reported that TVP had met the national target for recruiting new officers across the county and the PCC had pledged further finances to support neighbourhood policing. She also stated that social media interaction was being utilised to get the message out to residents to ensure a better service and promote what the police were doing and remind people to report crime.

Crimes should primarily be reported through 101 or online and the police were aware that many rural communities felt isolated being away from the larger towns so they felt that there was little engagement, however, as previously mentioned, the WhatsApp groups were addressing this issue.

One of the largest operations currently underway which was causing the most challenges was pony and trap racing on the A413 which bordered many other areas and could be rural crime, issues with highways, general driving offenses etc. TVP was working closely with all their partners to ensure that this activity was disrupted but not displaced to another area. If anyone had information relating to this issue, Emma appealed to members to report it. Contact numbers/details below.

The Greenyard policy was to be launched across all areas ensuring that any injured ponies or horses found were given the support needed.

Stuart Hutchings explained that he was with the rural crime task force of TVP with a team of 2 sergeants and 10 PC's which would rise to 18 PC's which would cover the whole force. There was a dedicated 'intel cell' meaning that there was a team of dedicated intelligence officers looking at hotspot areas and offenders through the team, which then mean that those hotspot areas and offenders could be targeted. Rural crimes were defined by four different areas, from heritage crime, e.g. people using The Ridgeway for off road biking, damaging historic forts, Roman locations etc. to nightwalking which some farmers would experience, to environmental crime which included recovering stolen farming plant machinery and assets and it was noted that £1.5 million worth of machinery had been recovered within the last 15 months.

Rural crime was unique in that offenders would live in one place such as Reading, then drive to another part of the country, steal an item such as a horsebox trailer

and drive it back overnight. Hence the need for farmers/landowners to record the full details of the machinery they have on their land to help the police to recover that machinery item should it be stolen.

It was noted that hare coursing was a big issue in the Thames Valley area two years ago with landowners and farmers calling in live reports of hare coursing across their fields. Hare coursing was not just hunting with dogs, it was also criminal damage, intimidation and public order. Fear of assault was real so TVP took the issue on and after a month of action armed with details of offenders, they managed to seize vehicles. Dogs would be taken off them and offenders were searched. If knives were found then they were charged with possession of a bladed article. If drugs were found on them they were then charged with drugs possession. This then led to house searches along with the seizure of mobile phones. All this work sent out a message that TVP were actively attempting to stop hare coursing and would prosecute offenders. Working with the CPS and dedicated wildlife specialists all points of the legislation were covered. This had wiped out live events being seen by landowners and what TVP were now experiencing were overnight reports. Drones were not being used to film the offenders before moving in to investigate. TVP were now asking landowners if they had dashcams so that evidence could be recorded and passed on to TVP. Understanding 'what3words' helped too as it enabled TVP to know the exact location. With the help of four different rural crime teams the Environment Agency as well as the national vehicle intelligence team, hare coursing had been impacted greatly and offenders were aware of the police's hostile approach.

Emma Taylor introduced herself and explained that she worked alongside Claire Marchant, who some members of the Rural Forum would know, and that she hoped to get better engagement with the rural community and show that TVP was listening to them. Emma promoted the WhatsApp group and asked anyone who would like to be added, or if they had any issues or questions, to contact her (contact details below).

In answer to questions, the following was noted:

- The WhatsApp group was targeted at landowners, farmers and members of the rural community and that Councillors would be more than welcome to join as it may help with their work due to it being a good communication tool.
- The subject of dogs worrying sheep in the Wycombe area was raised particularly at this time of the year as it was lambing season. One woman in Whitney had been charged and fined for a dog let off the lead which had worried sheep. It was noted it more a case of awareness.

TVP contact details:

Emma Burroughs Commander for South Buckinghamshire Local police area:
emma.burroughs@thamesvalley.police.uk

Inspector Stuart Hutchings Thames Valley Police Rural Crime Taskforce:
stuart.hutchings@thamesvalley.police.uk

PC1451 Emma Taylor Neighbourhood Officer Thames Valley Police: 07800 703226
Emma.Taylor@thamesvalley.police.uk

Slides attached.

The Chairman thanked the speakers.

The Chairman also reported that Kate Higginson who was due to give a presentation on the 'Update on survey of Rural Communities undertaken by Community Impact Bucks in 2022 was unable to attend the meeting and that this item would be deferred to another time.

7 Rural Farm Tour

Liz Hornby explained that the Rural Farm Tour would take place on Thursday 29th June 2023 and be held at Monkton Farm which was located near to Handy Cross in High Wycombe. The farm forms part of the Carington estate and details of the tour will be circulated in due course.

8 Any Other Business (by prior notification to the Chairman)

The Chairman invited Sachi Shah to update the forum on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. She explained that she was the project manager for the scheme through the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership which was hosted by Buckinghamshire Council. During her presentation, the following was noted:

- The scheme is a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement required by law under the Environment Act.
- The strategy would agree priorities for nature's recovery and map the most valuable existing areas for nature. It would also map improving habitats and wider environmental benefits.
- Locations to create or improve habitats would be identified.
- Final regulations and guidance based on the pilot process was now published and an FAQ would be circulated.
- It was stressed that the strategy was clear that it would not force owners and managers of land to make any changes.
- It was noted that a priority was to make the strategy as collaborative as possible but currently the scheme was seeking a farming representative to join a stakeholder consultation group as they could provide insight from a farming perspective. If anyone was interested to please contact Sachi Shah at the details below.

Sachi Shah: sachi.shah@buckinghamshire.gov.uk or www.bucksmknep@co.uk

Slide attached.

The Chairman thanked Sachi Shah for her update.

The Chairman invited Ted Howard-Jones to introduce his item and who explained that there was to be a grant event for landowners.

This would be held at Red Kite Farm, Southend (Near Henley) RG9 6JR on Wednesday 26th April at 6pm

The focus would be an update on Grant Funding, with Justin Mumford of Nicholsons Nurseries speaking about grants to help plant trees or hedges. Tom Cackett of Savills would then provide an update on all the changes to SFI, Countryside Stewardship and ELMS that had recently been announced.

Representatives of the Forestry Commission and Natural England/Catchment Sensitive Farming would be there and who would be on hand to answer questions.

The previous evening discussing grants (in November) was oversubscribed, so please RSVP your attendance ASAP to ensure a seat at this larger venue.

RSVP to ted@countrysidemarketing.co.uk

The Chairman thanked Ted for this information.

The Chairman then asked the members of the Rural Forum to contact either Liz Hornby or Chris Schmidt-Reid if they had any ideas for presentations at future forum meetings.

9 Date of next meeting

Thursday 27 October 2023 at 5.00pm.



Rural England Prosperity Fund

Buckinghamshire Council

Rural Forum update



Rural England Prosperity Fund -Addendum to UKSPF Investment Plan

- In 2022 Government announced a new Rural England Prosperity Fund amounting to £110 million, aiming to help in improving productivity as well as strengthening the rural economy and communities
- Buckinghamshire Council has been allocated £1.8million of this funding which is set to be delivered over two years (2023/24 and 2024/25)
- This is a top up of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- In November 2022, the investment plan was submitted to central government. A decision was expected in January 2023 but has been delayed, the new anticipated date for the expected decision on funding will be in April 2023. The programme is anticipated to be launched in May 2023

Local Context

- Buckinghamshire's rural economy is SME rich, yet has experienced low levels of job and business growth in comparison to the urban areas of the county the wider South-East region
- Improving rural business support could result in more good quality, local jobs being created for residents
- Our REPF investment plan is focused on levelling up rural areas within Buckinghamshire to encourage growth and create high skilled jobs and opportunities, complementing the Council's UKSPF investment plan.
- Areas that the programme covers are rural areas, with built-up areas such as High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Chesham, Amersham, Beaconsfield and some of the surrounding villages not eligible for the funding.

Proposed Intervention – Rural business 2023-2025

- Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in Buckinghamshire's rural areas

2023-24 : £457,174

2024-25 : £1,371,521

- Expected outcomes include jobs creation, new businesses creation and business growth
- The Council will run the process as a rolling call for projects, specific dates will be published when applications are considered by a funding panel

Parameters, eligibility and proposed programme details

Programme details and parameters to be confirmed once signed off by the Council in May 2023. Some of the proposed parameters include:

- Businesses must be classified as a micro to small enterprise (0-50 employees) and a turnover or balance sheet less than or equal to €10 million in-line with DEFRA's requirements.
- Projects being supported through REPF cannot have received funding through another DEFRA scheme and the Council will need to ensure that projects are not being double funded.
- Anticipated grant amounts offered will range from £2,500-£300,000.
- Applicants will need to inform the Council whether they are in receipt of any state aid within the last 3 rolling years, to ensure they are not over the limit.
- Two funding routes are proposed to be provided; one for smaller grant of £25,000 or less and one for grants greater than £25,000.
- Grants will initially be offered at a 40% rate with businesses needing to match fund the remaining 60%.

Proposed funding process

1. Applicants will need to complete an EOI outlining details of their business, what they want the grant for and how much they are applying for.
2. This EOI will then be assessed and if eligible, applicants will be sent a Full Application.
3. Eligible applicants will be invited to complete a full application.
4. Applicants will be supported through the process and guidance notes will be provided
5. Applications will be assessed on impact of outputs and outcomes and value for money

Rural crime

Superintendent Emma Burroughs

Sergeant David Kuttner – Aylesbury police area

Constable Emma Taylor – South Buckinghamshire police area

Inspector Stuart Hutchings – Force Rural Crime task force

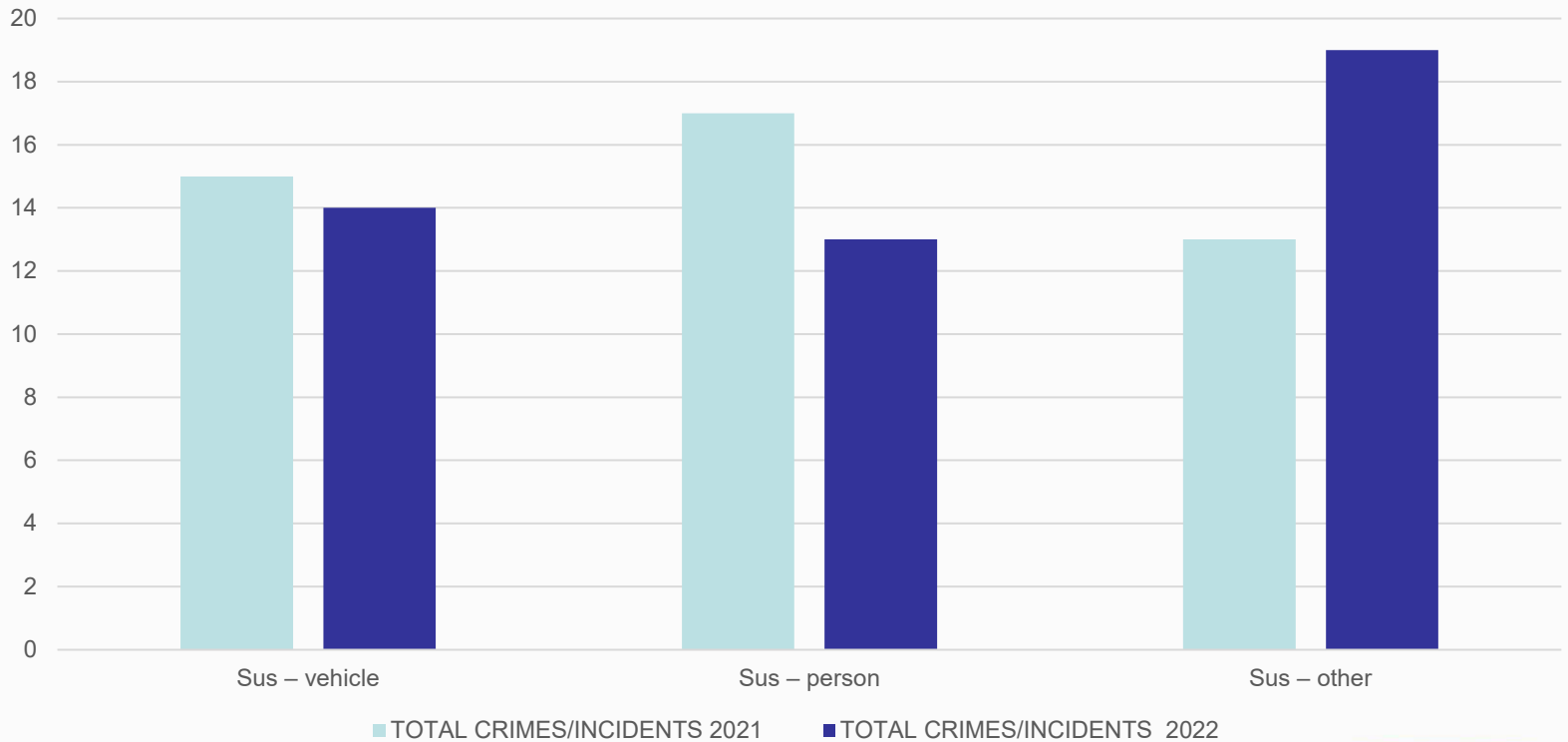
1. Thames Valley Police's commitment to Rural Crime
2. Crime data
3. Successes and Engagement opportunities
4. Hare Coursing

Crime numbers 2021 v 2022 for Aylesbury

YEAR ON YEAR RURAL CRIMES 2021/2022 - AYLESBURY VALE			
	OFFENCE	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2021	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2022
Page 17	Burglary – business	37	17
	Burglary – residential	11	11
	Criminal Damage	29	28
	Criminal Damage (due to hare coursing)	1	0
	Theft from motor vehicle	9	10
	Theft of motor vehicle	8	10
	Shoplifting	0	0
	Theft	43	30
	Theft in a dwelling	2	0
	Theft other than M/Vehicle/cycle	2	2
	Arson	2	8
	Theft of pedal cycle	0	0
	Dangerous dog	1	2
	Hare coursing	11	19
	ASB – community	1	3
	ASB – environmental	4	2
	ASB – personal	0	1
	Wildlife crime	33	16
	Hunting	4	7
	Heritage crime/incidents	0	0
	Rave	0	0
	Cause unnecessary suffering to animal	2	1
	TOTAL		200

Rural Crime Incidents - Aylesbury

YOY SUS - INCIDENTS AYLESBURY VALE 2021/2022



Crime numbers 2021 v 2022 for Wycombe

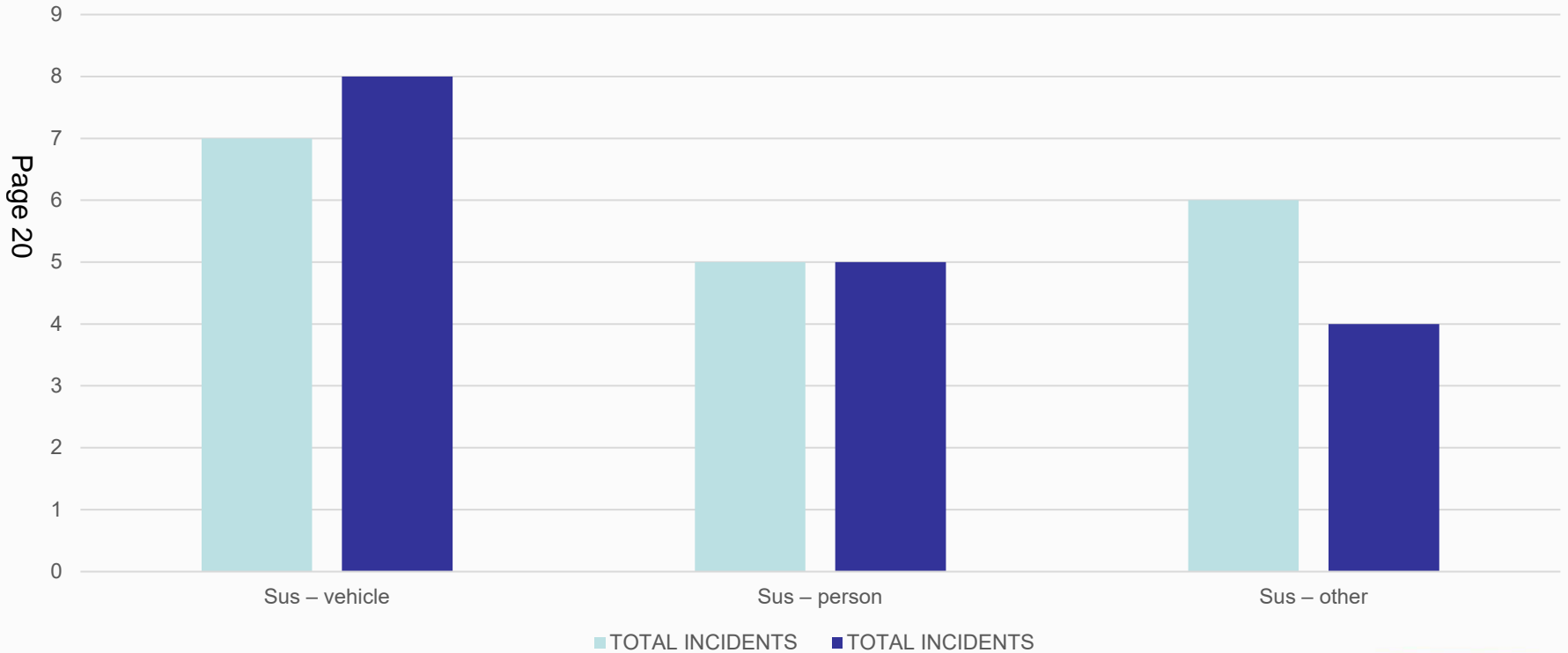
YEAR ON YEAR RURAL CRIMES 2021/2022 - WYCOMBE

OFFENCE	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2021	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2022
Burglary – business	8	3
Burglary – residential	8	3
Criminal Damage	13	14
Criminal Damage (due to hare coursing)	6	6
Theft from motor vehicle	2	5
Theft of motor vehicle	0	1
Shoplifting	0	1
Theft	13	9
Theft in a dwelling	0	0
Theft other than M/Vehicle/cycle	0	1
Arson	0	6
Theft of pedal cycle	0	0
Dangerous dog	1	1
Hare coursing	11	6
ASB – community	1	3
ASB – environmental	0	1
ASB – personal	0	0
Wildlife crime	13	14
Hunting	0	8
Heritage crime/incidents	0	0
Rave	0	0
Cause unnecessary suffering to animal	0	5
TOTAL	82	87

Rural Crime Incidents - Aylesbury

Rural Crime Incidents - Wycombe

YOY SUS - INCIDENTS WYCOMBE 2021/2022



Crime numbers 2021 v 2022 for South Bucks

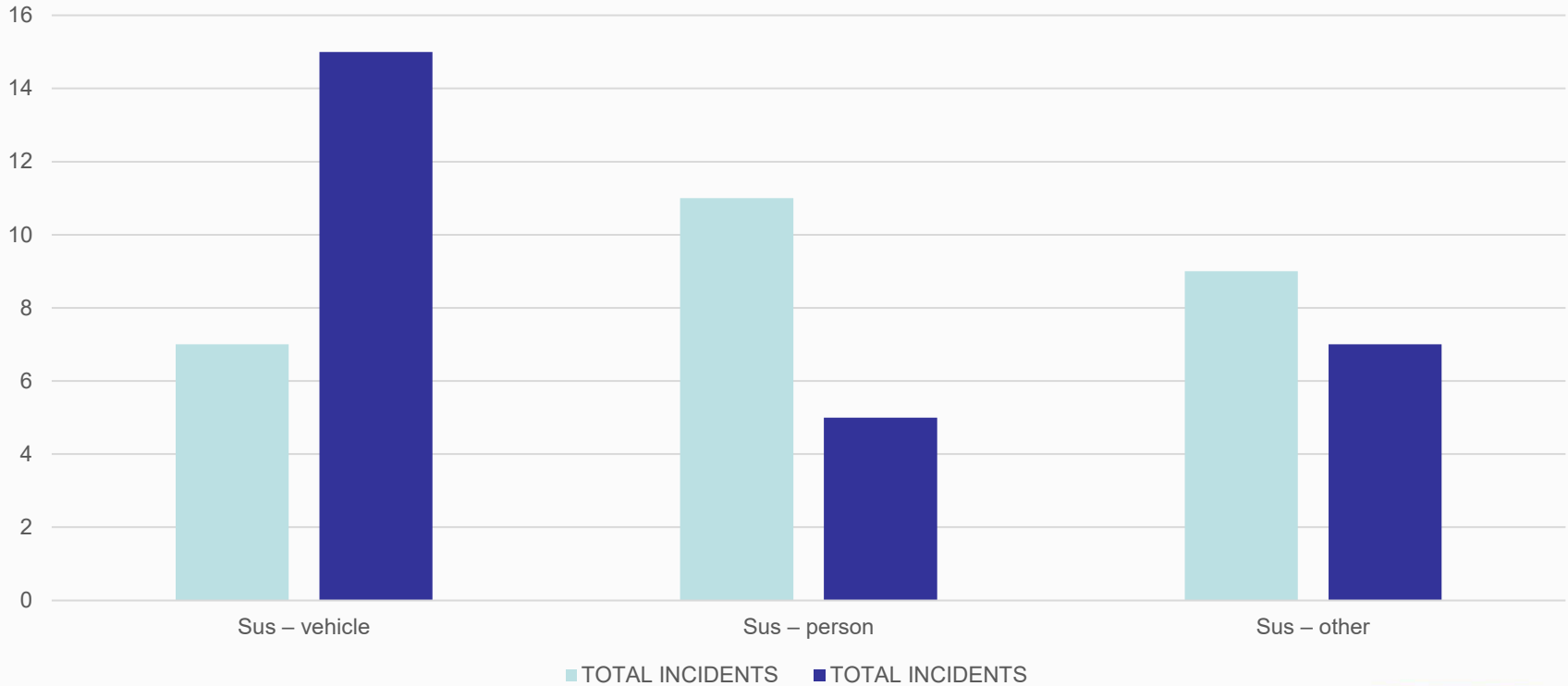
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YEAR ON YEAR RURAL CRIMES 2021/2022 - SOUTH BUCKS		
OFFENCE	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2021	TOTAL CRIMES/INCIDENTS 2022
Burglary – business	15	16
Burglary – residential	7	6
Criminal Damage	43	20
Criminal Damage (due to hare coursing)	3	2
Theft from motor vehicle	3	0
Theft of motor vehicle	2	4
Shoplifting	0	0
Theft	24	24
Theft in a dwelling	2	0
Theft other than M/Vehicle/cycle	1	2
Arson	7	5
Theft of pedal cycle	0	0
Dangerous dog	0	2
Hare coursing	7	7
ASB – community	0	1
ASB – environmental	4	4
ASB – personal	2	1
Wildlife crime	21	14
Hunting	0	3
Heritage crime/incidents	0	0
Rave	1	0
Cause unnecessary suffering to animal	1	3
TOTAL	143	114

Rural Crime Incidents – South Bucks

YOY SUS - INCIDENTS SOUTH BUCKS 2021/2022

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Activity on the Aylesbury police area:

- Engagement Activities
- Rural Whatsapp Group
- Social Media
- TV Alerts
- Young Farmers Meeting
- Horse Tack Marking training

Challenges/ Current Rural Crime Issues

- Operation Arable crime series (thefts of caravans trailers, tools etc. stored on farms).
- Hare & Deer Coursing.
- Operation Torby/ Alliance (joint operations with neighbouring forces).

Activity on the South Buckinghamshire police area:

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- Engagement Activities
- Horse Tack Marking training
- Proactive operations
- Op Gallop- Pony and Trap racing

Rural Crime Task force

- Commitment into 2023- 2024
- Role of the task force
- Success stories

Questions?



LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

sachi.shah@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

ABOUT

- List of priorities and a spatial map for nature's recovery
- Buckinghamshire (not including MKC) pilot
- Timeline

FAQs

- LNRS & ELMs
- Land Identification
- LNRS & Other Policies

REQUESTS

- Steering Group Representative
- Stakeholder Consultation Group