



Securing the rural economy: Protecting the countryside and businesses from crime



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Rural assets, livelihoods, the environment and crime

In the spring of 2017, Home Secretary Amber Rudd publicly commented on the 'county lines' phenomenon, in which big city drug gangs are executing a strategy of exporting their trade to counties, towns and communities across the UK.

County lines involves orders being placed to anonymised mobile phone numbers, and dispatched by using vulnerable young people as couriers for drugs in one direction and cash in the other. The gangs may also establish a local presence by 'cuckooing' – exploiting a vulnerable adult and using their home as a base to operate in the local area. Using text and email address books they mimic the 'BOGOF' (Buy One Get One Free) marketing tactics popularised by supermarkets to attract customers and build 'marketing databases'.

However, in attempting to expand their horizons, the activities of big city criminals are not restricted to the drugs trade. Theft by gangs, or more formally in the terminology of the National Crime Agency (NCA), 'Organised Acquisitive Crime' (OAC), in rural areas is a well-established and growing trend.

Farmers and landowners may be seen as wealthy targets that provide rich pickings, but it's not just about family owned farming businesses and livelihoods passed down through generations. Rural enterprise also encompasses a diverse range of economic activities, including historic sites and places of interest; leisure parks and holiday properties; country houses and hotels; industrial sites; food production and corporate agri-businesses.

The combination of high value items, isolated sites and sometimes lower levels of security, may make rural crime seem like a low risk, big win venture to the crooks. Even when high levels of physical security are employed, away from inhabited areas, criminals may be emboldened to use brute force and power tools to overcome security measures.

Rural crime may see items stolen to order and the seizure of containerised loads on sea routes, such as those to Ireland, provides a clue that assets may be bound for overseas buyers, in what is clearly a highly organised and lucrative criminal enterprise.

A report by the NCA highlighted the major 'OC' (Organised Crime) challenges faced by British Police forces, revealing there were believed to be 5,866 active gangs operating in the UK, comprising in excess of 39,000 members.

Popular items favoured by the crooks are ATVs (All-Terrain Vehicles) quad bikes, tools and fuel oil and diesel. Gloucestershire saw the cost of rural crime increase 38% year-on-year from 2015 to 2016, and nationally insurance statistics pointed to a sharp rise in theft in the first half of 2017.

In the light of such an onslaught of numbers, many believe the budget cuts to policing have been a false economy which has limited the ability of the police to respond in a consistent and timely manner. At best, it appears the forces of law and order now only have the resources to focus on the most serious crimes.

It seems that even if it is unacceptable, some level of criminal activity may have to be 'tolerated' because the police simply cannot be everywhere. However, try telling that to victims that criminals re-target once essential high value items have been replaced, but who then find it difficult to obtain insurance.

In such circumstances, the best way to protect rural assets, livelihoods and the environment is to deploy more sophisticated security measures. In this guide, we discuss some typical rural crimes and suggest how CCTV and integrated security systems provide the capability to deter and detect crime and identify criminals.

Examples of rural crime

Fly tipping

Although it's rather the opposite of 'Organised Acquisitive Crime', fly-tipping is a serious problem afflicting rural spots and 'quieter' areas of urban settings. Public footpaths, bridleways and near school grounds are just some of the places blighted by illegal waste dumping. Not only is it an opportunist crime, it is also carried out by organised criminal gangs, which may charge for disposal, but who go on to dump illegally.

The scale of the problem is quite staggering. In 2015 - 2016 Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) released figures showing there were 936,090 cases of fly-tipping reported, a year-on-year increase of more than four percent. This produced a clean-up bill to local authorities (ultimately paid by taxpayers) of £49.8 million. There were 2,135 prosecutions - roughly one for every fifty cases. About 1,000 sites which had been blighted in this way were cleared up and closed down.

One illegal dump site situated in a leisure area on the edge of West London contains an estimated 5,000 tons of waste. Because no-one knows what has actually been dumped (except may be the criminals), fly-tipped material may pose a health hazard. Rather alarmingly, there has been an increase in the amount of carcinogenic material containing asbestos, which poses a serious hazard to public health.

Fuel theft

Energy is an expensive and valuable commodity and it is little surprise it attracts thieves. When stored in jerry can fuel containers, diesel is 'pre-packaged' ready for theft. Larger storage tanks or vehicle tanks are likely to need to be siphoned, meaning thieves need to be well organised and have 'dwell' time on the site to draw off the fuel.

The theft of fuel oil for heating may involve the removal of many hundreds of litres and is likely to need a tanker vehicle, or an ordinary commercial vehicle modified with a tank.

Evidence suggests that criminal gangs watch fuel depots and follow delivery vehicles to identify properties to target. Although stolen fuel may be difficult to handle, store and sell on, the trend for theft shows a steady rise. It should be noted that gas cylinders may invite theft by individuals or cells with the intention of committing terrorist atrocities.



Vehicle and machinery theft

2016 saw the cost of rural crime to the UK economy fall by 4% in 2016 as farmers turned their properties into fortresses to protect themselves from increasingly brazen attacks from thieves targeting rural areas.

The decrease, was attributed to the success of joint initiatives involving police forces, NFU Mutual (the largest rural insurer), and other stakeholder organisations. However, theft claims statistics for the first half of 2017 showed a sharp rise of over 20% as a new wave of rural crime hit the countryside.

Quads and ATVs

Quad bikes and ATVs (All-Terrain Vehicles) are favourites with crime gangs and they are disappearing from farms in large numbers - thanks to being easy to transport and the absence of vehicle registration plates. The cost of Quad and ATV theft claims to NFU Mutual rose to £2m, an increase of 11% from 2015 to 2016.

Land Rover Defender

Since the decision by Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) to cease production of the iconic Defender in 2016, it has become an even bigger target for thieves. Insurance pay outs for the theft of Defender vehicle claims to NFU Mutual rose to £2.1 million in 2016, an increase of 17% since 2015. Regions seeing the most activity from gangs targeting Land Rovers for theft last year were the North East, followed by the South East, the Midlands and the South West.

Tractors

Increasingly, thieves are cloning the identity of tractors to make detection more difficult. Rural businesses in the eastern counties are most at risk of tractor theft, potentially because it may be nearer to ports with direct access to Europe. Gangs are stealing small, older tractors for export to developing countries as well as expensive large models.

Livestock theft

The estimated cost of livestock theft fell from £2.9m in 2015 to £2.2m in 2016. All UK regions experienced a fall - apart from Wales where the cost rose by £100,000. Thefts of large numbers of lambs by rustlers are raising concerns that stock is being stolen for slaughter and is being processed outside regulated abattoirs before illegally entering the food chain. Some of this theft may be attributed to ethnic minority gangs and driven by cultural factors.

Defeating crime gangs with CCTV and integrated security

Despite the use of strategies and tactics to make getting away with theft more difficult, such as 'hardening' fuel storage, using electronic devices to track stolen vehicles, and DNA testing and electronic chips to trace livestock, CCTV and integrated security systems provide a three pronged approach to defeating organised crime gangs targeting the rural economy.

Deterrence

Signage warning of CCTV, as well as the physical presence of cameras and other security devices discourages criminals, and may make them seek less well defended sites.

Detection

Detecting criminal activity in real time enables appropriate responses from accredited monitoring services with the ability to verify criminal activity and notify police.

Identification

Recording people participating and vehicles being used in the pursuit of criminal enterprises enables identification through facial recognition and vehicle registration marks.

Rapid Deployment Cameras

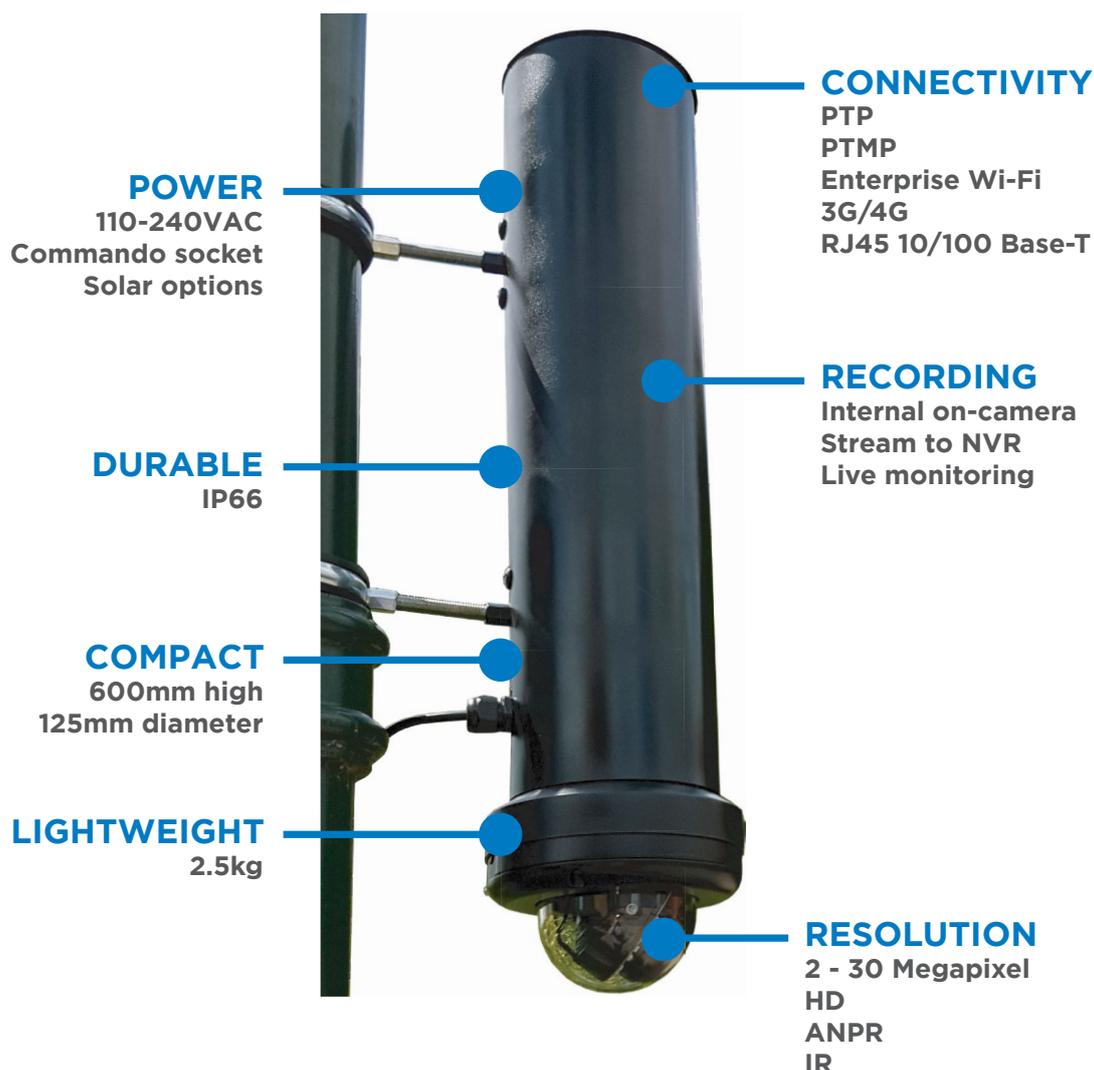
Conventional CCTV installation is often technically challenging in a rural setting. Cameras and other integrated electronic security measures need power and the ability to communicate in real time with monitoring stations. This may simply not be possible with conventional cameras, where the cost of wired networking and providing power lines may be economically prohibitive.

The Rapid Deployment Camera overcomes such issues. Options for solar power and a range of wireless network connectivity modes provide flexible options for real time monitoring and control by CCTV monitoring personnel.



Rapid Deployment Camera features and benefits

- Mount to existing infrastructure such as a pole, a wall, corner, or a suitable tree
- 'Plug 'n' Play' power feed via commando socket connector
- Integrated wireless PTP, PTMP, Wi-Fi and 3/4G support
- Rapid re-deployment to move cameras to where they are needed quickly
- Solar power and wireless options for isolated, remote and difficult to install places
- A completely configurable solution where each camera is specified and built to meet the precise requirements of the security situation that needs to be addressed
- Advanced features including HD PZT (Pan, Zoom, Tilt) cameras, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), facial recognition, software analytics, and remote automated monitoring and alerting are powerful tools for defeating criminals seeking 'easy pickings off the land'.



Integrating security systems

For suitable sites, integration offers the ability to bring systems together at a central monitoring station. This may be at an internal security station or at an external emergency service compliant monitoring station.

Integrating CCTV with the following systems supports better security in rural settings:

- **Access control**
 - Audio entry systems
 - Number keypad entry systems
 - Biometric fingerprint readers entry systems
 - Swipe cards/fobs ('token') entry systems
- **Alarm systems**
 - Intruder alarms
 - Fire alarms
- **Sound monitoring**
- **PA systems to warn trespassers off before committing intrusion offences**
- **Gates and barriers**

The key advantages of integrating security systems include:

- Verification of fire and intruder alarm activation with visual information from CCTV systems eliminates false alarms (false positives), enabling emergency service response to be correctly prioritised
- Real-time camera images can be viewed on mobile devices, so first responders are equipped with live footage of the scene
- Verifying alarm activation with CCTV enables Public Address systems to be used by monitoring station personnel to issue verbal warnings, helping to deter further trespass or criminal activity



Typical places and assets protected with a rural security solution

- Perimeter security for farming and agricultural sites
- Monitoring livestock - detect rustling and birthing in real time
- Protecting against theft of high value items such as farm machinery and fuel
- Large scale food processing and industrial sites
- National trust properties, castles and historic places
- Houses and estates open to the public and farm parks
- Country house hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, holiday lets
- Theme parks and tourist attractions
- Holiday parks, resorts and campsites
- Farm shops and rural retailers
- Wedding venues, land hosting events and festivals
- Equestrian sites such as stables and racecourses

SUMMARY

Better security for rural settings from iC2

iC2 is a leading mid-market security systems provider and was established in 2001. The business is owned and managed by a team with a collective experience of over 100 years in the electronic security business.

iC2 CCTV and integrated security solutions help make rural settings more secure. Our integrated systems enhance security by blending Rapid Deployment Cameras with other security elements such as access control of doors, gates and barriers, intruder and fire alarms, and public address systems.

A prestigious client list, including world leading agricultural products and services businesses, and producers of food ingredients and pharmaceutical crops, demonstrates how solutions are deployed to meet a variety of requirements to protect rural businesses, organisations and communities.

From deterring theft of high value assets, to sporting venues, public safety and protecting children, vulnerable and high net worth people, solutions are deployed to meet a range of legitimate purposes for which they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Heating Oil Thefts

Northern Energy

<https://www.northernenergy.co.uk/energy-for-the-home/domestic-oil/heating-oil-theft/>

Rural Crime Report 2017

NFU Mutual

<https://www.nfumutual.co.uk/news-and-stories/rural-crime-report-2017/>

7 frequent mistakes when selecting CCTV and integrated security solutions

iC2 CCTV Ltd

<http://www.ic2cctv.com/white-papers/7-frequent-mistakes-when-selecting-cctv-and-integrated-security-solutions/>



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About Us

Keeping you safe and secure at all times

iC2 provide you with innovative solutions tailored to you and your sector. We are London-based with a national team of surveyors and engineers that work closely with our clients throughout the UK and internationally.

Our unique consultative approach allows us to tailor bespoke systems to your individual requirements, ensuring that your operational requirements are met.

We appreciate the need to demonstrate the best value to you every time and as a technology-led company, you can expect our cutting-edge and ground-breaking approach to serve your needs for many years to come.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss any requirements you may have. We are happy to give you impartial advice, should you have any queries.

