

Cheshire Constabulary

[Counting the Crimes 2](#) (CTC2) was written by Action Against Foxhunting in Autumn 2021.

CTC2 is a follow up to our first report [Counting the Crimes: Police Response to Hunt-Related Calls](#).

CTC2 consists of the main body of the report and reports on 34 English police forces.

The report for Cheshire Constabulary is set out below.

All the reports on other forces can be found [here](#)

The report is based on a large amount of [research](#). Some of the research is included in the report, and the rest is available on request. To the best of our knowledge, everything is correct.

[The conviction of Mark Hankinson](#) occurred as we were writing this report. We know that the public will be looking to the police to take action against those who hunt foxes illegally and we hope that this report will be of use as it includes practical advice. The report is intended to be helpful and honest, rather than critical.

For the Facebook links, we are aware that posts on social media are not always completely accurate. We have tried to verify the contents, and have contacted many of the posters for further information. Some have replied, and some have not. We are always interested in hearing different views of the same incidents, and if police are able to provide further insight, we would be happy to include this.

FWG – Frontline Wildlife Guardian. The term includes both saboteurs and monitors.

If any force wishes to discuss the report, please contact us info@actionagainstfoxhunting.org. We are happy to meet on line.



How did the force respond to CTC? You can select multiple options.

- One email
- Exchange of emails
- Meeting
- No response at all

For Email response - was the response detailed?

- Yes
- No

How do you rate the response?

1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this rating?

The response was not given until we met.

Were there follow up emails and did the force reply?

- Yes
- No

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this response?

We appreciate the time that Cheshire Police took to engage with us.

For the forces who met with us, how open were they?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

For the forces who met with us, how useful was the meeting?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this response?

At the time, the meeting appeared useful and we learned a lot about Cheshire's response to hunt-related incidents. However, following the meeting, we spoke in detail to the FWGs in Cheshire and some felt that the officers in the meeting were trying to present too positive a picture of what was going on in Cheshire. We did note at the time that Cheshire Police were content with their response to illegal hunting. We all know that they still have not had a successful prosecution, despite the active involvement of a Cheshire MP.

There does appear to be a difference of opinion about the police between anti-hunting groups in the county. This difference of opinion makes it difficult for AAF to judge what is happening in Cheshire.

How willing was this force to take on board what we said?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this response?

They appeared to be open to information. A detective sat and took notes all the way through. However as before - difficult with Cheshire. They agreed to a meeting, gave a fair bit of feedback and information but how they see things contrasts with how some FWGs see the situation in Cheshire.

FOR ALL FORCES - Has THIS force taken any actual steps to improve their relationship with FWGs?

- ✓ Yes
- No
- Other

What steps have they taken?

They have had meetings with FWG groups. They have also appointed a police liaison officer.

A force of contrasts here again. One set of monitors they get on with. The rest appear to have at least some doubts.

Does this force have an aide memoire or any guide to policing illegal hunting?

- ✓ Yes
- No

What do you think of the guide/aide memoire?

1 2 3 4 5

- ✓ - - -

Why have you given this response?

The good points are that a) they have one and b) it is about illegal hunting. However, it is generalised and lacks detail. It also refers to FWGs as “protesters”, which is incorrect.

How well trained are the police in this force?

1 2 3 4 5

- - - ✓ -

Why have you given this response?

Cheshire Police told us that all frontline officers likely to attend a hunt-related call will be appropriately trained.

How do you rate this force’s behaviour in the field with regard to illegal foxhunting and incidents involving FWGs?

- Usually appear biased
- ✓ Sometimes appear biased
- Rarely appear biased
- Never appear biased

Why have you given this response?

Hit reports show that FWGs are sometimes the target for police, and not the

hunt.

There are a number of FWG groups and independent monitors operating in Cheshire and we spoke to several of them, more than any other area. They have varying relationships with Cheshire police. One particular officer in this force appears to influence opinions considerably. One group is happy to work with him and his teams. Some groups and individuals say they prefer not to work with him and others refuse to deal with him at all. This situation was apparently not the case with past officers who appeared to be respected by most FWGs. Friction often escalates when this officer posts on The Rural Crime team Facebook Page. Other police forces have found themselves in this situation. Most that we are aware of have (eventually) moved the officer to another area of the force.

Some of the comments received re Cheshire from FWGs:

- WCOs ignore terrier men
- They allow blatant cub hunting
- Non WCO officers at hunting events were described as 'clueless'
- "The police are concerned about public order first and foremost"
- The officer referred to above "does come across as biased" (the police say the opposite is true of all the above)
- "Some of the WCO's I've had dealings with when called out seem to have some grasp of the Hunting Act and there have been occasions where they've been helpful. Alas there are other WCOs who have been very stand-offish with us monitors/sabs only to then be seen acting very differently with hunt/support.
- The police allow the hunt to continue hunting after a kill
- Cheshire police are good with badger crime
- Cheshire are "more pro active than some other forces I've worked with"
- Comment from Cheshire Police: "The hunt have shown FWGs their trails

and scents (FWGs we spoke to were completely unaware this ever happening)

- Cheshire police do investigate fox kills but cases are generally not pursued by the CPS (this isn't disputed).

Looking at the response to our FOI asking about police systems and organisation with regard to foxhunting, how do you rate their ability to take action on illegal foxhunting?

1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this rating?

Despite all their efforts, Cheshire Police seem unable to stop illegal hunting.

Do you think the force focuses too heavily on public order as opposed to dealing with illegal foxhunting?

- ✓ Yes
- No
- Other

Why have you given this response?

Hit reports show very little action about illegal foxhunting, but a great deal of action surrounding public order. However, we have had three positive reports from FWGs about Cheshire Police (our own survey).

Overall, how do you rate this force?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Any other comments?

This force appears to be in stalemate regarding the effective policing of illegal fox hunting as per the comments above under the 'biased' options.

Regardless of the outcome of any court cases relating to the Hunting Office webinars which were exposed November 2020, what was stated in the recordings cannot be unsaid. The Hunting Office made it clear trail hunting IS fox hunting and there was much talk about ways to create a “smokescreen” to cover up illegal hunting. Disrespectful comments were made about the police. The Hunting Office represents all registered hunts in England and Wales therefore the discussions were relevant to all police forces.

In the opinion of AAF, how can this force improve?

Cheshire Police willingly engaged with AAF. They replied to follow up emails promptly. However, one WCO is causing a great deal of damage to the relationship between the force and FWGs. We have looked into FWG complaints against this officer and have concluded that the FWGs have a reasonably sound basis to be wary of him. Cheshire Police say that they want to improve relations between them and the FWGs, but this isn't going to happen when there is such a significant reason for the FWGs to distrust the police. In our opinion, this officer should not be a WCO. Even if the bias is "perceived" rather than actual, the damage is done. Trust is crucial.

All officers would benefit from a much greater understanding of the issues surrounding illegal hunting and the motivations of FWGs. We have created three helpful documents: [Practical Advice for All Officers](#) – this includes training advice

[A Field Guide for Officers](#) – to use if they are called to a hunt

[A Study - Why sabs and monitors are not protesters.](#) – an insight FWG organisations.

Facebook posts and media articles mentioning Cheshire police and hunting.

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshiremonitors/posts/2723058657958714>

17/9/20. Wynnstay blatantly cub hunting. – Police ask for film from FWGs regarding hunt covid rules.

<https://www.facebook.com/CheshireHuntSabs/posts/1072936323126527>

<https://www.facebook.com/CheshireAgainstBloodSports/posts/599342420759831>

19/9/20. Cheshire Forest hunt. 40 plus riders and supporters break covid rules – FWGs call police who do not turn up.

<https://www.facebook.com/CheshireAgainstBloodSports/posts/613483619345711>

10/10/20. Chester Forest hunt. Police stopping FWG vehicles “because they can”. Terriermen present.

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshiremonitors/posts/2744486329149280>

10/10/20 FWGs look after injured hounds left on road by Winnstay Hunt – Police initially not interested. Rural Crime team did help later. Covid rules broken again.

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshiremonitors/posts/2753007254963854>

17/10/20. Wynnstay hunt probably kill. Police attended.

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshiremonitors/posts/2789127074685205>

21/11/20. Wynnstay Hunt kill fox using hunting office prescribed tactics, just after the webinars. FWGs intimidated by hunt behaviour – presume police were informed

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshiremonitors/posts/2803722929892286>

12/12/20. Wynnstay hunt. illegal hunting, police informed and attended. Terriermen appear to release ‘bagged’ fox, Police investigating.

<https://www.facebook.com/CheshireAgainstBloodSports/posts/657293824964690>

14/12/20. Cheshire Forest hunt. Illegal hunting. Assault on FWG, footage sent to police.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-58550518>

14/9/21. Call to permanently ban ‘trail hunting’ on land owned by Cheshire Council.