

Durham 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 Durham 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?

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

The force responded to say they were not going to respond.

For Email response - was the response detailed?

- Yes
- ✓ No

Look at the content and the usefulness of the response.

1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

Why have you given this rating?

Durham Police refused to send AAF a response. They ignored the report completely in the first instance, and only when reminded did they tell us they weren't responding. If they had any interest in policing illegal hunting, they would have responded.

Were there follow up emails and did the force reply?

- Yes
- No

Why have you given this response?

Durham Police did not engage with AAF at all. This was surprising as there was an article in the Independent about a local hunt invading an animal sanctuary. A cat was killed and police were involved.

Has this force taken any actual steps to improve their relationship with FWGs?

- Yes
- No
- Other

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

- Yes
- No

Why have you given this response?

Durham police, in their reply to our FOI asking if they had an aide memoire, did not even seem to be aware of the NPCC guidance available to all forces.

How well trained are the police in this force?

1	2	3	4	5
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✓	-	-	-	-
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Why have you given this response?

There are no WCOs at all in Durham Police and only one officer (Wildlife Crime Lead) with any responsibility for illegal hunting. While this is a very small force (1200 officers), there is active hunt (Braes of Derwent) which generated 5 hit reports in the limited season 20 - 21, and 26 reports of hunting related offences on AAF survey.

No evidence of what training, if any is provided. No evidence of wildlife crime training being seen as important - it's inevitable the force might be perceived as biased at times.

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

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

Why have you given this response?

If officers are not trained, and the force places no importance on tackling illegal hunting, officers will inevitably appear biased because they won't realise what illegal foxhunting looks like. Public order, however, is easily recognisable, so officers will tackle that.

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?

All Durham Police have is one officer who (possibly) knows about illegal hunting.

With no dedicated WCOs, no aide memoire, no evidence of what training, (if any), is provided and no wish to interact with AAF, it is highly unlikely that Durham Police would be able to investigate a report of illegal foxhunting effectively.

Feedback from FWGs tends to be that officers are sympathetic, but say they can't do much. FWGs also report that this force historically tends to not take action, not follow up on incidents (despite video/photographic evidence being produced) and that their administration is poor. We can only base our assumptions on our communication with FWGs as the force aren't willing to interact.

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?

Durham Police attended a call of illegal foxhunting on 29/12/20. They focused their attention on the hunts rather than the FWGs.

Overall, how do you rate this force?

Take into account willingness to engage with AAF, willingness to engage with FWGs, actions in the field etc.

1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

Any other comments?

This is a low rating, but it does not reflect the effort that some dedicated and honest Durham Police officers are making.

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.

There is an active and dedicated AAF group in Durham. There is no reason at all why Durham Police cannot engage with this group. Police are expected to engage with the public and most forces actively encourage it. It is also crucial for officers to appreciate that FWGs are potentially a significant resource for the police.

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

The satisfaction rate for Durham Police on the AAF survey was 44%. For a force which does not trouble much with illegal hunting, this is puzzling. A reasonable conclusion would be that some Durham Officers are willing to do what AAF would consider the "right thing", but they may not have the backing of senior ranks. This force needs trained WCOs, prepared to challenge the local hunt - Braes of Derwent - on their anti-social behaviour. The latest incident involving this hunt has distressed many locals.

<https://www.facebook.com/NEhuntmonitors/posts/1260600474404818>

For our FOI request, the first response we had was inadequate and inaccurate. It was only after we requested an internal enquiry that they responded in a reasonable fashion. AAF felt that Durham Police (as an organisation) are poorly organised and are reluctant to show respect to an anti-hunting group such as AAF.

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.

Hit Reports and Media Reports mentioning hunting and Durham Constabulary

<https://www.facebook.com/NEhuntmonitors/posts/983432215454980>

27/9/20. South Durham hunt cubbing. Attempted ram of FWG vehicle, police request dashcam footage.

<https://www.facebook.com/NEhuntmonitors/posts/986535655144636>

29/9/20. South Durham hunt. Police called attended regarding intimidating behaviour from hunt support and illegal hunting.

Police were called due to intimidating behaviour and illegally hunting who responded and spoke to hunt support before speaking to monitors.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hunt-hounds-dogs-cat-braes-derwent-tendercare-durham->

[b719890.html?fbclid=IwAR1HjlxIbWBtuZE2KxIP4MpK_OdjmXsxwE-EVCNqAsGnvffO3KuPwr5dexs](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hunt-hounds-dogs-cat-braes-derwent-tendercare-durham-b719890.html?fbclid=IwAR1HjlxIbWBtuZE2KxIP4MpK_OdjmXsxwE-EVCNqAsGnvffO3KuPwr5dexs)

<https://www.facebook.com/NEhuntmonitors/posts/984926938638841>

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/18765678.hunt-hounds-accused-killing-cat-rampage-near-stanley/>

29/9/20. Braes hunt kill a cat and rampage through boarding kennels. Police say it's a civil matter.

<https://www.facebook.com/NEhuntmonitors/posts/1056441084820759>

29/12/20. police patrolled an area after call out from FWGs about illegal fox hunting. Quotation from the hit report:

With police patrolling after being called out for illegal foxhunting and Harry nomask searching for lost hounds,a dejected Mark Baldwin and Rob Wilkinson headed back towards the meet ,it was all over and only 2pm plenty of daylight, but they had enough ,or maybe they all went down to Great Stanton to look for Harry's special facemask ,😂