

## Essex Police

[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 Essex Police 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](mailto: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 email response?**

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	-	✓	-

**Why have you given this rating?**

It took some persuading before Essex Police would engage with AAF, but once they started, it all went really well. The officers who responded in detail were very keen to build a better relationship with FWGs.

**Were there follow up emails and did the force reply?**

- ✓ Yes
- No

**For the forces who met with us, how do you rate this response?**

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	-	-	✓

**Why have you given this response?**

Essex Police met with us on line twice, once on 12th November 2020 and 2 March 2021. The second meeting was a response to a problem that arose between Essex Police and FWGs after a meet of the Essex Farmers Hunt on 12/12/20. Essex Police were very keen to resolve the issues.

**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?**

We found the officers open, respectful and knowledgeable. We also learned that some officers are treated badly by FWGs, even when they are trying to do the right thing. An active FWG joined us in the meeting, which was very helpful indeed. The notes from the meeting (available on request to AAF) show the extent of the discussion.

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

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	-	-	✓

**Why have you given this response?**

As a result of the first meeting, Essex Police arranged training for their officers with the League. A second meeting was held after a police complaint was made by an FWG. Police initiated this meeting.

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

- ✓ Yes
- No
- Other

**What steps have they taken?**

Essex Police continued the dialogue with the FWG after the meeting. This meant that when a problem did arise between the police and the FWGs, both parties already knew each other and the differences could be thrashed out in a meeting.

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

- Yes
- ✓ No

### How well trained are the police in this force?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

### Why have you given this response?

Top WCOs clearly know their stuff. They were keen to improve general training, this is already happening. All officers have training on the Hunting Act not just WCOs. Control room staff have some training. That said, the situation that caused the second meeting between FWGs and police was most likely caused by lack of knowledge about hunting by the police.

The training is improving.

### 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?

The force does have some history of stopping and questioning FWGs while appearing to be friendly with the hunt/letting them continue hunting.

Hopefully, better training will address this. The police emphasised they want FWGs to report anything which might be considered intelligence, saying a buildup of intelligence is important. They are particularly interested in hearing about badger sett blocking. It may seem they don't follow up re hounds on private property etc but this is because these complaints are frequently not pursued further by the person who reported it. The incident in 2018 where a WPC laughed at an FWG carrying a dead fox was dealt with, force was concerned about this. Officers are expected to step aside if they find themselves in a situation where their personal interests could conflict (but this cannot be 100% guaranteed?)

The incident on 12/12/20 (details available on request from AAF) suggested that Essex Police did intend to be proactive with illegal hunting. However, the officers who actually attended appeared to make biased assumptions about the FWGs and they acted accordingly, possibly inflaming the situation with their words and actions. This was a pity; the intentions were good, but the execution was poor. The officers reinforced the FWGs' feelings against the police. This should not have happened. But, the incident occurred before the officers were properly trained. In the second meeting, Essex Police confirmed that if they had been trained, they probably would have acted differently.

**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?**

Essex is a big county, with a significant hare coursing problem. They are also a mix of rural and urban areas and the urban areas take up a lot of

police resources. However, they are making an effort with training, so we are hopeful that things will improve in the next season.

**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?**

Untrained officers responding to hunt-related calls usually assume that the issue is public order.

The force has been accused of bias in the past, but potentially this will be improved with the increased training/aide memoire. The police were helpful in the meeting, giving advice about how FWGs might want to respond to being stopped. They said they don't have to stop FWGs re car insurance details etc as they have an app which can do this. They also pointed out names and addresses don't have to be given unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect a crime. Police can take fingerprints on a mobile device there and then. They might do this if have good reason to suspect the name and address is fake. They also suggested that FWGs should ask officers to turn on their bodycams should they so wish. All this advice indicated that the officers we spoke to were keen to be seen as fair.

**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
-	-	-	✓	-

Essex Police Force's willingness to engage with AAF and FWGs is impressive. However, a later FOI revealed that there is no coordinated approach to information and intelligence when it comes to hunting offences. For instance, unless an individual officer happens to remember a badger sett blocking on a hunt day in the correct area, no one will connect the incident to the hunt. Systems which allow efficient communication are crucial.

Essex police appeared keen to improve the policing of hunts from our first meeting. They have since acted on this: LACS has given training and they held a later meeting to discuss a particular issue etc.

An FWG present at the meeting said if the hunts provided details of trails to the police it would make it far easier for the police to arrest sabs for aggravated trespass, so it makes no sense that they don't do it. The police agreed. Essex Police said that the hunts "don't answer the police" when asked about trails which is why they aren't asked very often. If the law was changed so the hunts were obliged to give details the police would regularly ask them.

The police officer we spoke to had been spat at by FWGs some years ago. It was pointed out that most FWGs have a strict code of conduct nowadays.

**Any other comments?**

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 that 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. We hope that all police forces will accept that regular law-breaking by the hunts is likely and that they will respond accordingly.

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

We believe that Essex Police are making an effort to tackle illegal foxhunting.

If police receive a call about illegal hunting, it is highly unlikely that the attending officer will know the details of the Hunting Act. This is particularly true in Essex, as the county is enormous. The need for an easy-to-use accurate aide memoire (available in an app, maybe) is obvious.

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 Essex Police**

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthLondonHuntSaboteurs/posts/144982343992718>  
<https://www.facebook.com/NorthLondonHuntSaboteurs/posts/164752768682342>  
 31/10/20. Attempted assault by terrierman on FWG. Evidence given to police

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthLondonHuntSaboteurs/posts/175557344268551>  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=2092144790930180&id=368440019967341](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2092144790930180&id=368440019967341)

12/12/20. Essex Farmers hunt. Large police presence.