

Devon and Cornwall 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 on Devon and Cornwall 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. We are happy to meet on line.



How did the force respond to CTC?

- One email
- ✓ Meeting (several meetings)
- ✓ Exchange of emails
- No response at all

Devon and Cornwall Police are the national lead for hunting and the NPCC guidance for hunting was produced by this force. The guidance is now being reviewed and we have been asked for our input. We met with DCC Paul Netherton to discuss the first Counting the Crimes. We have had several more meetings with his staff officer, who has answered many of our questions. We appreciate the time he has spent with us.

On a local level, we also spoke with the officer responsible for the operational response to hunting-related issues (see below for further detail).

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?

Well-considered response, but nothing outstanding. However, locally, D&C did take on board what we said in CTC and have started to take action.

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
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Why have you given this response?

It was very clear that the NPCC are aware of the extent of the law-breaking by the hunts.

For the local meeting (a phone call), D&C willingly shared information about their new approach to hunting incidents. They completely accepted that their knowledge of the law was limited and their approach haphazard. They have plans to tackle it robustly.

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

1 2 3 4 5

- - - - ✓

Why have you given this response?

Before engaging with AAF, D&C had meetings among themselves about how they should improve their response to hunting incidents. **They also took on board our Field Guide and sent it to their legal team to review. Update required.**

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

- Yes
- No
- ✓ D&C are regrouping at the moment, with regard to policing hunting. Once they are organised, they will be able to meet with FWGs.

What steps have they taken?

They have spoken to AAF.

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 national guide was written by D&C police. It is not perfect and needs considerable improvement.

How well trained are the police in this force?

1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

At the moment, they are not well trained. There are only 20 WCOs among a force of over 3000. There are 27 hunts in the area.

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?

A lack of resources, limited training and no aide memoir will doubtless sometimes create an impression of bias. There have been reports of FWGs being unhappy with the response of some officers. On the other hand, some officers have been particularly helpful.

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 the number of hunts in the area, D&C do not have a dedicated team. However, they do plan on improving.

20 WCOs (alongside other duties) have received general wildlife crime training. There are approximately 27 hunts in Devon and Cornwall - a large number compared with other counties, therefore resources are very stretched. Additionally, the fact there is no local aide memoir must affect the ability to police hunts competently. One of the reasons the high-profile Lamerton Hunt case failed in March 2021, was allegedly due to a lack of expert knowledge and poor administration within D&C police.

However, the force has a drone team they could utilise, and they are considering an **"Events Notification Sheet"** for hunts. They also have a **'Share Point'** set up for sharing information. **Update required.**

Information about illegal hunting is included on their public website.

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

- Yes
- No
- ✓ The response is mixed. Some officers appear to treat FWGs badly because they see them as trouble-makers.

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?

D&C recognise that they have considerable room for improvement. But they are addressing it. **This will need to be reviewed at the end of next season to see whether it made a difference in the field.**

There is a real mixture of positive and negative in this force. For instance, a lack of resources, limited training and no aide memoir is balanced by various future initiatives, plus good feedback regarding some officers.

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?

From the feedback we’ve received, D&C officers do not always listen to the FWGs in the field, focusing rather on the more easily understood public order issues. Every police force we have spoken to has expressed some degree of frustration regarding the difficulty in communicating with FWGs. A greater understanding of FWGs motivations would be helpful (see below)

Because D&C are the national lead for hunting, it is very important that this force gets it right locally. It was a surprise to find that the force which produced the NPCC Guidance, used by other forces all over the country, is itself sometimes disorganised and poorly trained. We are confident this is being addressed and hope to see the results through the next hunting season.

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 and media reports mentioning hunting and the police](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/ashrescuecentre/posts/2815809845299013>

15/12/20. Feedback from a rescue centre re the devastation caused by a local hunt.

<https://www.facebook.com/devoncountyhuntsaboteurs/posts/3401740839934260>

31/12/20. Eggesford/Lamerton hounds all over village gardens, got hold of cat. Hunt trespass reported to police, FWG's vehicle damaged. **I**

<https://www.facebook.com/devoncountyhuntsaboteurs/posts/3411018369006507>

2/1/21. Cotley hunt. FWGs assaulted, blatant fake trail laying. Police stop FWGs. Police appear unconcerned by the hunting.

<https://fb.watch/51tKgM2Ure/>

<https://www.huntsabs.org.uk/lamerton-huntsman-found-not-guilty-of-illegal-hunting-despite-video-evidence/>

February 2021. Lamerton hunt court case - poor police admin, lack of expert knowledge police/judge, possible bias from judge based on comments he made in a previous case.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=511956433199024>

<https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/huntsmen-dug-badger-sett-bid-5717471>

July 2021. Eggesford hunt convicted of interfering with badger sett in 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/page/399696387292862/search/?q=kennels>

21/8/21. Protest at the Western hunt kennels.

Further comments regarding the hunt kennels protest above from one of the organisers:

“They (the police) were quite horrible to us at the kennels event. Asked some very dodgy questions about how we contact the WCO

Very poor attitude and they're starting to look a bit biased at how often and fast they're turning up when the Hunt whistle”

Other notes:

27/10/20 FWGs called police for Covid breach by Western Hunt. Police did not attend and did not follow it up. Madron Well, Penzance.

26/12/20 FWGs called police for Covid breach by Western Hunt. Police did not attend and did not follow it up. Madron Well, Penzance.