

Ministry of Defence Police (MDP)

[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 Ministry of Defence 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
- ✓ 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 MDP police showed they were completely open to ideas from AAF. They suggested a meeting, saying that CTC was the first time that they were truly aware of the hunting issues on MDP land. FWGs joined us for this meeting and their input was invaluable.

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?

The officers who came to the meeting were keen to hear what we had to say, and they are also very keen to do something about the situation.

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?

This was one of the best meetings we had, in terms of the police listening to us. They listened in depth to accounts of incidents from FWGs and openly admitted they didn't know much about hunting, appeared engaged and open

throughout.

For all forces: how willing was THIS force to take on board what we said?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	-	-	✓

Why have you given this response?

MDP officers took away some action points from the meeting and they followed them up. In particular, an FWG mentioned that the hunt on Salisbury Plain used a Red Card to go into areas where the public are forbidden. The FWGs wanted to have the same card. However, it turned out that no one should have one, unless they have a particular reason (not hunting).

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

- ✓ Yes
- No
- Other

What steps have they taken?

A pre-season meeting was being set up with FWGs and AAF.

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?

They are not trained at the moment, but the MDP is addressing it.

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 hit report showed police acting in what appears to be a biased way. However, the officers we have spoken to have acknowledged the mistakes made in the video and are very keen to address them.

How do you rate their ability to take action on illegal foxhunting?

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this rating?

This remains to be seen*. The force clearly intends to improve and we will help them to do that. However, it will be the next season's hit reports that will show if our work has been effective. (*See hit report below 13/11 – we are impressed by the MDP here).

An FOI revealed that the MDP have no information held re monitoring hunting activities to ensure licences are complied with, no information re trail details being asked for, no information about hunt support trespassing away from allowed paths or their general behaviour towards the public. This is despite Training Safety Marshalls and Land Wardens checking every hunt, according to another FOI to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. Also despite the fact that the MDP have strict rules regarding the “trail” scent, the scent is not tested at all. Additionally, all hunts on MDP land have to be a member of a recognised governing body i.e. the Hunting Office and the leaked webinars disclosed Hunts governed by the Hunting Office are routinely encouraged to break the law.

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?

Public order is an issue as this is Salisbury Plain. MDP Police are there to

ensure that military activity on the Plain can continue uninterrupted by the public.

However, the force has shown that they do not want illegal hunting on their land either.

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?

Hunts have licences to hunt on Salisbury Plain. The licence, created by the landowners (MDP), is lengthy, but it does little to prevent illegal foxhunting. The landowners are, of course, breaking the law themselves if they allow illegal hunting to take place. The hunts are never monitored by the landowners or the police. However, there is a group of anti-hunt monitors who observe and film what happens on a hunting day. The hunts are unwelcoming to the monitors and make every effort to prevent them from seeing what they are doing. They regularly intimidate the female hunt monitor who is often alone in her vehicle. The hunt monitors have never witnessed any “trail hunting” – they have only seen traditional hunting, which is illegal.

Because the MDP police are the only defined force operating on a defined piece of land which licences hunts, the police, AAF and the hunt monitors have a unique opportunity to work together to prevent foxes from being pursued and killed.

We acknowledge that Salisbury Plain is a large area, and as such, difficult to police in normal circumstances. We also acknowledge that the police are not

able to monitor the hunts themselves. However, if the hunt really were trail hunting, they would not have a problem with allowing police to see the “trail maps” in advance. As it is licenced land, the hunts should not be able to refuse.

Discussions are continuing between AAF, the FWGs and MDP. We are now hoping that the landowners will also join us.

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.

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

Training is the key to improvement for the MDP police.

FWGs are a potential resource for police and should be viewed as such.

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 involving MDP Police and hunting

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=677994156467824>

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=129477455592867&id=105536684653611

<https://www.facebook.com/Readingsabs/posts/661377107875871>

<https://www.facebook.com/Readingsabs/posts/656940304986218>

31/10/20. Abuse of hounds, assault on sabs, dangerous driving, illegal hunting, sabs targeted by police for alleged motoring offences

<https://www.facebook.com/538688733/videos/10159009206723734/>

31/10/20. Same hunting incident as above, this time showing how an officer has no idea of the law.

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3590603797643839>

26/1/21. Information concerning the way the Royal Artillery hunt record kills

<https://www.facebook.com/GuildfordHuntSabs/posts/4896920760358136>

13/11/21. Police active and helpful, challenged the hunt