

Staffordshire 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 Staffordshire 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 force was interested in AAF and our report. They were keen to engage with us to understand more.

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?

Staffordshire Police met with us twice and we appreciate the time they spent with us. However, the officers we spoke to would not accept that hunts routinely break the law, even after the webinar. They 'disappeared' once the

unfortunate incident of 21/12/20 (stopping of Manchester Hunt Sabs on what later appeared to be confirmed as fabricated circumstances). See below for link.

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?

The meeting was useful and Staffs police were very open. However, no real progress can ever be made unless Staffordshire Police understand the extent of the law breaking by the hunts in Staffordshire. It did appear to show a lack of knowledge about fox hunting generally compared to most other forces. The meetings could have been an excellent starting point to change this but this wasn't to be.

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

1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

Instead of taking advice from us about illegal hunting and the poor relationship between Staffordshire Police and anti-hunt groups, they used the opportunity to ensure that we understood that they do not believe that Staffordshire hunts break the law regularly. This means that if the hunts don't break the law, the police don't have to take any action. We know that

police resources are limited, but we suspected that the police responses were sometimes disingenuous.

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

What do you think of the guide/aide memoire?

	1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

The Aid Memoire appears biased against FWGs. It does not use the words “illegal hunting”, yet it devotes an entire page to “aggravated trespass”, something the hunts are always calling the police about and is very little to do with protecting and safeguarding people. Face coverings are also dealt with in detail. From this, we believe that the public order aspect is aimed at the sabs and not the hunt.

How well trained are the police in this force?

	1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

Only a small percentage of police in Staffordshire are trained on illegal hunting.

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?

There are multiple incidents in which the police appear biased.

This force has a history of allegedly stopping FWGs for no valid reason. This encourages a poor relationship with FWGs. The police must be aware of this - not least as a result of Staffordshire Hunt Sab's open letter to the force in Dec 19.

We were assured the 'officer in the BASC lanyard' incident in the 2019/20 season was treated 'very seriously' however that it could happen at all may show a lack of awareness/training.

The incident in December 2020 in which FWGs were stopped and searched for stolen goods was very likely biased, not least because of the FOI from the FWGs that revealed that the thefts (the basis for the search) were fabricated.

Also the concentration on policing hunt events on a 'public order' basis is bound to increase tension. And the lack of proactive policing (asking for trail details, questioning terrier men on the basis they may be aiding and abetting etc). Lack of resources was cited as a reason not to use drones to watch the hunts, (plus an apparent need to ask the hunts' permission to do that), yet apparently they found the resources to police the badger cull with a plane? (26/9 Facebook post)

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?

There is no reason to believe that Staffordshire Police cannot take action about illegal hunting. In fact, in our meeting with them, they did appear reasonably knowledgeable. However, they were not willing to challenge the hunts, even after the webinar.

There was reluctance to accept that trail hunting = fox hunting. A senior wildlife officer felt the webinars were teaching the hunt to be more organised and be visible in order to placate people. He did not think it was a clear attempt to break the law. The force in general did not view the webinars to be particularly relevant to Staffordshire with another senior officer saying “we do not have information or intelligence that suggests hunts are acting unlawfully in Staffordshire.” (nb: this is despite the fact that all hunts have to be affiliated to and guided by the Hunting Office). It was felt that there was no problem in ex policemen being involved in the webinars in that they can do what they like in retirement as long as it's lawful. Additionally, the points raised above about the aide memoir are relevant to this section.

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?

FWGs are constantly being challenged. The hunts, however, are not.

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
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

Staffordshire Police force did spend time with us. But the meetings were of very little value to us because the force is reluctant to accept that there is a significant problem with illegal hunting in the county. One of the meetings happened very soon after the webinars came to light and Staffordshire Police said that it would make no difference to them as it did not involve Staffordshire. We pointed out that the webinars were run by the Hunting Office, (the hunts' governing body) and as such they involve every hunt in the country. The police said that the word "smokescreen" was ambiguous and that the webinars were probably teaching the hunts to be more organised. This complete misreading of the webinars confirmed our belief that Staffordshire Police are reluctant to challenge the hunts on anything at all. We are not sure whether that is because they are uninterested in illegal hunting or they are biased themselves.

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

The key improvement would be for Staffordshire Police to understand that the FWGs are trying to uphold the law - the same aim as the police themselves. After the webinars and the conviction of Mark Hankinson, their view of the hunts should change. If they understood this, they might stop targeting the wrong group. Staffordshire Police must begin to look at the hunts and stop finding reasons not to. Whether the bias is unconscious or conscious, Staffordshire Police frequently appear to show it when they encounter an anti-hunt group (including AAF).

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 and Media Reports mentioning hunting and Staffordshire Police

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/612720756034766>

21/9/20 Hunt hounds attack a family dog. This is in Shropshire but the Albrighton regularly hunt in Staffs. Why would they be in a residential area if they were trail hunting?

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/676403839666457>

25/9/20 Conviction of 2 terriermen, Meynell & North Staffs Hunt. Assaulted Member of the public who was asking why they were hunting foxes. Staffordshire police ARE aware of the type of support the hunts attract.

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/664540520852789>

5/12/20. Elderly couple apparently targeted by hunt support in error. Police aware.

<https://www.facebook.com/ManchesterHuntSabs/posts/4178563482160885>

21/12/20. Link to Staffs police searching Manchester Sabs regarding alleged local thefts

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/678994009407440>

It appears police were not being honest re 21/12/20 incident above:

<https://thecitro.substack.com/p/staffordshire-police-carry-out-spurious?fbclid=IwAR2LVGu9B90-x10djbmodUHoe8eSAdrGOTThuLI5bdgurkaVSyb8z02I0bXs>

Media report re above 21/12/20 incident above:

https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/a-barbaric-tradition-hundreds-stokeontrentlive-4833023?fbclid=IwAR2wZk_cFJCM4t5BtOprFVeluDsFpAl5bWKA316b0CutYjvnIL6kf8lMqsw

25/12/20 media article. What local people say about the hunts.

A cross section of past reports and articles below. Included for reference in order to illustrate the very real problem of illegal

hunting in Staffordshire and some history behind the unfortunate lack of trust in the police by FWGs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK4xPOGI11Q>

2014 video - This type of incident shows why FWGs struggle to trust the police. The 21/12/20 incident has unfortunately reinforced the lack of trust amongst at least some FWGs.

<https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/burton/former-meynell-hunt-members-admit-3550556?fbclid=IwAR2VBw7ezYjQIJ9IxDq3HAumeGqLqAm2k7VCsdlbYeXCQBrio5gnd1qXz3>

Nov 2019 - The Meynell convicted of illegal hunting. The hunt is based in East Staffs although this incident occurred in Derbyshire. Staffordshire hunts do hunt illegally.

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/452713945368782>

Dec 2019 - Open letter written to Staffordshire Police (and Derbyshire & West Mercia) by Staffordshire Hunt Sabs explaining their concerns and intentions. We do not know if there was any reply to this letter.

<https://www.facebook.com/staffordshirehuntsabs/posts/473558959950947>

25/1/20 report describing both apparent blatant hunting and also again highlighting the poor relationship between Sabs and police.