

SURREY AND SUSSEX 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 Surrey and Sussex 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.



NB There is an UPDATE on the present position in Surrey and Sussex at the end of this report.

How did the force respond to CTC?

- One email
- ✓ Exchange of emails
- ✓ Meeting (two meetings, with a third coming up)
- 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?

While detailed, it was a standard response. It did not acknowledge the need for extra training in the force. However, this need has now been acknowledged and is being addressed.

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?

We felt that the force was very focused on public order and did not fully appreciate that the hunts are routinely breaking the Hunting Act. The response was non-committal.

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 officers were reasonably open on the surface but they used words cautiously throughout, not wanting to commit themselves to much. When asked about failures re the Hunting Act within Surrey/Sussex they would only state that 'there may have been occasions throughout all police forces where they have not got it right in terms of investigations into illegal hunting in previous years' Regarding the incident 24/10 when FWGs were allegedly held up by a particular (smirking) officer for 40 minutes, they described this as a snapshot in time with no context. The police view on the incident wasn't offered. Meeting did give some insights into plans to make positive improvements.

However, the next time we met with the force, they had made significant efforts to improve relations with FWGs and to address illegal foxhunting itself.

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

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this response?

This remains to be seen. Not much feedback given. They did say policing the Hunting Act can be a nightmare. Non-committal about how likely officers would be to ask questions of the hunt saying it was difficult for them to ask questions not under caution (yet the NPCC guidelines suggest questions are asked about the trail). They did say “we did not say the police feel they cannot question a hunt trail”.

They rejected our "Field Guide to Officers Attending Hunting Incidents".

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

- ✓ Yes
- No
- Other

What steps have they taken?

They are having regular meetings with FWGs. Also invited AAF. However, not many FWGs actually attend, as they think it is a waste of time. They are also planning on asking the hunts for the trail maps next season.

They said they are keen to engage with FWGs and build relationships. They have also told AAF they are working with LACS to improve training and are working on an educational document for officers re gathering evidence in respect of illegal hunting. AAF were invited to a meeting with several FWG groups 14/4/21. FWGs were given the opportunity to explain things from their point of view which included problems with cases expiring, not charging suspects, lots of IT and administration problems. The Crawley and Horsham case was discussed where police failed to provide sufficient video evidence despite having it (March 21). The police said they now have a system where monitors can upload evidence.

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?

Outdated. They say they are working on an educational document for officers re gathering evidence in respect of illegal hunting.

How well trained are the police in this force?

1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

Only 2 WCOs for the whole of Surrey/Sussex. Surrey Police said most officers won't have a clear idea of what to ask a hunt if they attend.

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?

At present the force do have a reputation for being biased. Reports/photographic evidence of apparent over familiarity between the police and the hunt is an issue, posing outside a BASC tent (see hit report 7/8/20) was also bound to create friction due to links between the different 'country sports'. Administrative and operational failures inevitably create perceived bias. Holding up FWGs yet having no standard procedure for requesting trail details from the hunt is bound to reduce confidence. Surrey police say there is no need to question officers (including WCOs) about any interest in bloodsports as the standards required of police officers generally covers this and the strict Police Code of Ethics should prevent bias. (If one of the two WCOs happened to be pro bloodsports that would equate to 50% being pro? In this situation it would be good if they would follow Dorset's example).

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?

Not an FOI - came from our discussions with them. Operation Rush is not part of the Rural Crime team. It is still heavily focused on public order, but this is (hopefully) changing. They had an opportunity to prove that they could prosecute, but police failure with the Crawley and Horsham prosecution indicated catastrophic incompetence.

They do mention hunting with dogs on their website but there is inconsistency between the two police forces (Surrey/Sussex). They acknowledged illegal hunting goes on but with only 2 WCOs for the whole of Surrey/Sussex and most officers not having a clear idea of what to ask a hunt if they attend this will be limited until training is improved (and the number of WCOs increased?)

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?

Based on the hit reports/media reports there would seem to be an issue here. This has been an issue for some time, we have first hand accounts from trusted sources re previous seasons.

Also, the “Memorandum of Understanding”, which the force wanted the FWGs and the hunts to sign was focused on public order once again. It did not address illegal hunting, the root cause of the public order difficulties. It also used the term “protesters’ to refer to the FWGs. They are not protesters.

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?

While the force is very willing to engage with us, incidents in the field and prosecutions are letting them down. Forces are judged by what is seen by the public, not by their intentions. It would also help if they acknowledge publicly that they are tackling illegal foxhunting. As they ARE planning to tackle illegal hunting, it makes sense to say they are,.

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

There are only 2 WCOs for the whole of Surrey/Sussex. Surrey Police said most officers won't have a clear idea of what to ask a hunt if they attend.

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, media reports and other research for Surrey and Sussex.](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyHuntSabs/posts/134167588231333>

26/8/20. FWGs report to police with video evidence – Surrey Union huntsman using mobile while driving.

<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyHuntSabs/posts/139667987681293>

6/9/2020. Surrey Union break covid regulations – FWGs give video evidence to police

<https://www.facebook.com/westkenthuntsabs/posts/1208917162820480>

15/9/20. Sussex police ignore covid rules and join in ESRM social gathering.

<https://www.facebook.com/SCoastHuntSabs/posts/1453118051562289>

10/10/20. Tractor ramming incident. Sussex police investigating.

<https://www.facebook.com/westkenthuntsabs/posts/1243657422679787>

<https://www.facebook.com/east.sabs/posts/3801372119883873>

24/10/20. Apparent bias from a Sussex officer

over allowing the hunt to get away:

What ensued was an embarrassment to policing and an embarrassment to British society as a whole. It was clear as day they'd been called by the hunt to stop us! PC Porter came up to our window demanding documents with no reason as to why he stopped us. Upon producing documents PC Porter announced that they could have been forged so he spent the next 40 minutes calling the relevant motoring departments to check we were road legal! During this time we questioned him on his ties with the hunt and you could see him smirking behind his mask. It was at this point he couldn't make eye contact and he slipped out that 'he had prevented a breach of the peace!'... I wonder if every 'routine traffic stop' is to prevent a breach of the peace!? If there was ever any doubt that [Sussex Police](#) were corrupt and in the pockets of the hunt then that has well and truly disappeared!

<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyHuntSabs/posts/180208016960623>

5/12/20. Surrey union hunt called police claiming FWG harassment.

<https://www.facebook.com/BrightonHuntSaboteurs/posts/10157527203071606>

5/12/20. Crawley & Horsham hunt – Police present

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3729656873765574&id=105305009534130

12/12/20. ESRH illegally hunting. Police called, did not attend (see comments below)

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3574041489300070>

16/1/21. Shooting, not fox hunting but apparent poor handling and bias shown by police. FWGs attacked and injured.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5537888819562137>

3/3/21 report. Failure to achieve prosecution against FWGs. Alleged bias and poor police admin. Ree 14/11/2019 incident. Shooting incident but involved FWGs looking for a fox hunt.

<https://thecitro.substack.com/p/cps-bungling-appears-to-let-crawley>

<https://thecitro.substack.com/p/intimidation-violence-and-illegal>.

10/3/21 court case against Crawley & Horsham dropped. Poor police administration/knowledge. (Also poor court and CPS admin/knowledge)

<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyHuntSabs/posts/243534100628014>

Old case retold on FB March 2020.

Re Nov 19 incident. FWG assaulted by huntsman. Counter allegation by huntsman. Personal details about FWG clearly revealed to huntsman by police- FWG says no other possible explanation. AAF have spoken to this FWG in depth. FWG says this incident ruined his family Christmas and despite having communicated with police in the past he has now lost all faith in them.

UPDATE

At a meeting with Surrey and Sussex Police (22 September 2021), Operation Rush Officers shared their plans for tackling illegal hunting in the coming season. This is a summary:

S&S police say they are now “talking about hunt crimes” and not focussing exclusively on public order.

32 sergeants across the forces have received training on the Hunting Act. Some of this was delivered by the League Against Cruel Sports. The aim of this training was for the sergeants to be able to support their officers with advice, when called to hunt-related incidents, or dealing with hunt-related investigations. They also listened to input from Phil Davies, one of the main speakers in the leaked webinar. AAF is surprised that police are still inviting him to meetings and hope that they put his advice in the context of what he said in the webinar. There, he was teaching hunts how to deceive police and avoid prosecution.

Officers intend to ask the hunts for trail maps, but are aware that they (the hunt) are under no legal obligation to provide them.

The force is considering using a drone to monitor hunt activity (though this would also include FWG activity). However, they do not have the resources to be proactive on a regular basis.

We voiced our concern about increasing violence from the hunts towards FWGs, citing the recent incidents in Somerset and Rutland. Police said they would bear it in mind for the coming season.