

## West Yorkshire 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 West Yorkshire 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?**

- ✓ One email
- Exchange of emails
- Meeting
- No response at all

**For Email response - was the response detailed?**

- No

**How do you rate the email response?**

**Look at the content and the usefulness of the response.**

1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

**Why have you given this rating?**

The reply was limited: "The guidance provided by the NPCC is our current force position, although this is constantly under review and each matter will be considered based on the individual circumstances." They also accidentally sent us a response meant for another anti foxhunting organisation, with a different agenda altogether.

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

- ✓ Yes
- No

**Why have you given this response?**

West Yorkshire made no effort whatsoever to engage with us personally. We also don't think they read the report. The report was written to be helpful to the police (and many forces have appreciated this) but WY did not appear to view it as a resource.

**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

**Why have you given this response?**

They say they use the NPCC guidance.

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

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1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

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**Why have you given this response?**

Out of a force of 5924 officers, only 19 are WCOs. We have no other

information about the training and assume if more were trained, they would have specified the number in their communications with us. Merely saying they refer to the NPCC guidelines suggests training is not a priority especially as the guidelines do not provide clear simple signs of fake trail 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?**

West Yorkshire Force is very mixed. An ex-inspector is Master of the Hunt and he released pictures of hunting scenes just after the webinar exposure. However, there is a highly-respected WCO operating in the force. She has been brought to our attention by several FWG groups and we hope to speak to her shortly.

**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?**

If the West Yorkshire WCO mentioned above responded, we are certain that the crime would be thoroughly investigated. However, we know that police do tend to stand by other officers, even if retired. Therefore, we imagine that

the Master of the Hunt (who used to be a police officer) still has influence and could, if he chose, make an investigation "disappear" if he called the right people. Even if this is just speculation, the damage that such a person does to a force's reputation with FWGs is immense.

**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?**

West Yorkshire police do not feature very frequently in hit reports. The response to CTC was limited.

**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?**

19 WCOs is a good number but with no Aide memoir and no apparent importance placed on training they are unlikely to be set up to act efficiently.

**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?**

The three stars is almost entirely due to the impressive efforts of the WCO trusted by the FWGs.

There is no evidence, however, that West Yorkshire Force as a whole has any interest in illegal foxhunting. The lack of interest is indicated (among other things) by accidentally sending a reply to us which was clearly meant for Foxhunting Evidence's query.

AAF would be very keen to engage properly with West Yorkshire because two officers (one retired) appear to represent either end of the pro and anti-hunting spectrum. It would also be helpful if the force gave us some indication that they had read CTC. Not reading it suggests lack of interest in the entire issue. AAF suspects that West Yorkshire as an organisation is happy to allow hunts to get on in peace; however, the respected Wildlife Officer also appears to be able to operate effectively. If she had the support of the rest of the force (which we doubt), we would be confident that West Yorkshire would be one of the leading forces in tackling illegal foxhunting. The York and Ainsty South (widely publicised kill 1/10/20) are known to sometimes hunt in West Yorkshire. We have a first hand account to the Badsworth hunting a fox across a back garden near Pontefract in front of young children. It's disappointing this force don't want to consider more effective training for their officers

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

Like all forces, WY needs to understand that the Hunting Office webinars and the subsequent conviction, have made all the difference. 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.

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.

The force has an important asset in the exceptional WCO, but our investigations suggest that she may not have the support she needs to tackle illegal foxhunting thoroughly.

### **[Hit reports and media articles mentioning West Yorkshire police and hunting.](#)**

Very few hit reports as FWGs in this area are in a stalemate situation with the police and do their best to avoid them as a rule

<https://fb.watch/5laVBA490e/>

1/10/20 York & Ainsty kill in North Yorkshire but they hunt in West Yorkshire too. West Yorkshire Hunt Sabs write in the comments:

‘Humberside Police, North Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Police. This hunt breaks the law every day across all three counties. It's time the fox hunting law was enforced. Stop them from going out blatantly killing wildlife and causing anti-social behaviour in the communities you serve.’

<https://www.facebook.com/WestYorksHuntSabs/posts/1882323241906794>

16/11/20 post. Ex West Yorkshire police officer Richard Thompson is master of the York & Ainsty. This contributes towards FWG trust issues with West Yorkshire police.

<https://www.facebook.com/pccj.newsone>

WCO is a credit to West Yorkshire Police. Appears to have a genuine interest in wildlife. Can she be more involved with improving the police reputation with fox hunting?