

Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire 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 email response?

Look at the content and the usefulness of the response.

1	2	3	4	5
-	-	✓	-	-

Why have you given this rating?

Standard response.

Were there follow up emails and did the force reply?

- ✓ Yes
- No

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

1	2	3	4	5
✓	-	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

Vague response. The force used "AAF are going to speak to the NPCC" and "We follow the NCPP guidelines" as a reason not to engage with us. They showed no interest in talking to us, despite a request.

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

- Yes
- ✓ No
- Other

What steps have they taken?

None that we are aware of. The PCC said ""the Rural Crime Team is working hard to engage, build and maintain relationships with both sides" but we have had no opportunity to find out what they mean by this and no evidence of it actually happening.

Does this force have an aide memoire or any guide to policing illegal hunting?

- Yes
- ✓ No

Why have you given this response?

They said there may be one in the future, pointing out a new look rural crime team had been created in Sept 20, but none at the time of our correspondence.

How well trained are the police in this force?

1	2	3	4	5
-	✓	-	-	-

Why have you given this response?

They say they work with LACS "to help ensure that there is the best advice available to help support the prosecution of offences under the Hunting Act",

but no mention of training being given in respect of helping officers to recognise giveaway signs of illegal hunting in the field.

Wiltshire Police say they have 35 WCOs in a small force of 1052. But they didn't know if they were still active.

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?

We can only go on FWG hit reports as there has been no opportunity to discuss this with the police.

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?

They have the potential to provide some great policing as they have a new improved rural crime team and 35 WCO but there is no mention of specific training in relation to illegal fox hunting situations in the field. There is also no mention of fox hunting/illegal hunting on their website. No particular department has responsibility for investigating illegal fox hunting allegations. Even after the webinarleak the PCC refers to fox hunting as a "debate" He said "the Rural Crime Team is working hard to engage, build and maintain relationships with both sides of the debate to best understand their views and concerns to avoid offending behaviour in the first place (sic)." There was no acknowledgement that illegal hunting even exists.

Despite the existence of a Rural Crime Team, hunting breaches are dealt

with by the CPT. The CPT cannot possibly have the experience to be able to investigate thoroughly.

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?

Can only go on hit reports from FWGs as have had no opportunity to discuss this with them.

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?

Vague, non-committal email in response to CTC. Vague, non-committal email in response to a Wiltshire resident's email to the PCC.

The overall impression is that Wiltshire isn't particularly interested in hunting breaches.

A recently retired police officer is actively involved in hunting. Given the Hankinson verdict, it seems probable that this officer is hunting illegally.

<https://www.facebook.com/bathhuntsabs/posts/4431144046938961>

However, the MDP on Salisbury Plain have readily engaged with AAF and are seeking to learn and improve. Wiltshire Police has close connections with the MDP police. This opportunity is also open to Wiltshire police. All they need to do is take us up on it.

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

The force must acknowledge that illegal fox hunting happens - especially after what was said in the leaked Hunting Office webinars and the conviction of Mark Hankinson. 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.

Hit reports and Media reports involving hunting and the police

<https://www.facebook.com/CIHWatch/posts/2730965573847418>

10/9/20. Threatening behaviour & hunt breaching covid regs reported to police.

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3254327841271438>

25/9/20 Facebook post - Positive action by Wiltshire police regarding raptor persecution, plea for similar action to deal with fox hunting.

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3493830697321150>

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3492103907493829>

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3499927620044791>

19/12/20 Covid illegal gathering of at least 40 hunt supporters, film of terriermen riding quads dangerously, illegal hunting, assault on FWG. Police were there.

<https://www.facebook.com/wiltshirehuntsabs/posts/3509774279060125>

26/12/20. Wiltshire Infantry Beagle Hunt (illegal hare hunters) call police who attend, block in FWG vehicle and check FWG documents. FWGs later went on to follow the South West Wilts fox hunt. Post illustrates the general bad feeling towards Wiltshire police from those who disagree with illegal hunting.