



SPARC

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



NFU Mutual
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS



Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime Strategy 2025 - 2028



Contents

Welcome	3
SPARC members	4
What is rural crime?	6
The 4Ps approach to tackle rural crime	7
The 5 SPARC National rural crime priorities and working groups	8
Key workstreams within each priority	10
Regional delivery via local PARC's	11
Challenges ahead	12

Welcome

This is the 3rd iteration of the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) which launched 9 years ago to bring together the rural community to prevent, reduce, and tackle rural crime across Scotland in partnership.

As we approach our 10 year anniversary of SPARC in 2026, we have continued to see a reduction in several rural crime types, enhanced visibility of the issues of rural crime and renewed commitment from numerous partners in working together to tackle and reduce rural crime across Scotland.

A visible and coordinated approach has been key to this, with shared campaigns raising awareness and engagement with members of the public.

SPARC: Building on previous successes

Previous SPARC strategies have achieved significant successes in building partnerships, increasing rural engagement across Scotland and raising the profile of rural crime.

National, regional, and local events have been attended by SPARC members, promoting the partnership and the local PARC's. Crime prevention advice and guidance has also been provided relating to our rural communities.

Promotional events, social media and mainstream media outlets have all been used to raise the profile of SPARC and rural crime.

Rural Crime training to local Police Scotland officers in rural vehicle identification tracking and tracing has been delivered and continues to expand across Scotland.

However, there is much more we can do in the years ahead.



SPARC Members



What is rural crime?

For the purposes of this strategy and following consultation with key and relevant partners, SPARC members have collectively defined rural crime as:

“Any crime that occurs in a rural location, or affects any person living, working or visiting a rural location.

With 98% of Scotland’s landmass classed as rural the challenges are plentiful with the partnership approach of SPARC being key to tackling this.

SPARC is a multi-agency partnership involving key organisations collectively working together to tackle rural crime.

Providing strategic focus, SPARC co-ordinates a committed and sustained approach across key stakeholders to addressing the causes, effects and impacts of rural crime within Scotland’s Communities.



The Four P's approach to tackle rural crime

A '4Ps' model of Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare has been adopted for the new rural crime SPARC strategy of 2025; to clearly define the key workstreams required to protect our rural communities in a holistic approach.

To tackle rural crime effectively, a focus on crime prevention and education with supporting agencies needs to be an absolute imperative, combined with effective, intelligence led enforcement action.

- Primary preventions aim to stop problems before they happen by strengthening rural communities and social structures.

- Secondary prevention targets those at high risk of offending or reoffending, to educate and/or divert them away from involvement in Rural crime.
- Tertiary prevention aims to reduce or prevent existing and reoccurring problems by tackling the vulnerability of the victim or location.
- Effective enforcement, intelligence led with local resources targeted to those causing the greatest harm.

Prevent

Stop people becoming the perpetrators of rural crime by:

- Collectively addressing the behaviours leading to rural crime
- Educating citizens on the impact of rural crime
- Identifying those at risk of becoming inadvertent perpetrators, and those at risk of offending, to enable them to disengage from this harmful behaviour
- Collaborating with support agencies to divert those at risk away from rural crime.

Pursue

Stop rural crime by bringing perpetrators to justice by:

- Proportionately but robustly investigating and detecting instances of rural crime
- Targeting high tariff recidivist
- Rural crime offenders using local and national resources
- Targeting organised crime groups who are operating cross border in Rural Crime using local and national resources
- Improving intelligence gathering, products and sharing between organisations on rural crime.

Protect

Strengthen the collective protection against rural crime by:

- 'Designing out' crime in partnership
- Understanding crime patterns and trends, developing preventative advice and products and sharing this information across SPARC at public events in partnership
- Using existing legislation to reduce the impact of recidivist offenders on rural communities.

Prepare

Mitigate against the impact of rural crime by:

- Collaborating to improve the reporting and recording of rural crime
- Work across the SPARC partnership to improve the response and support to victims of rural crime
- Create aligned partnership communications strategies on preventions, diversions and enforcement.



Our five rural crime priorities

Our key priorities for the next three years are focused on:

- Machinery/tool/fuel and metal Theft - (agricultural, renewables, forestry industry)
SPARC Lead - Police Scotland
- Livestock Crime - (livestock attacks/thefts and securing the integrity and safety of the food supply chain)
SPARC Lead - NFU Scotland
- Equine Incidents (Thefts of horses/tack and road safety)
SPARC Lead - British Horse Society Scotland
- Rural Fly Tipping (Fly tipping)
SPARC Lead - tbc
- Heritage Crime (Thefts and Anti-Social Behaviour)
SPARC Lead - Historic Environment Scotland

Through possessing a clearer picture of rural crime, SPARC has an opportunity to focus on preventing and reducing rural crime and offences in frequently targeted areas.

Our Priority Working Groups

We have refined the Priorities to reflect current trends and the projected emerging areas of rural crime.

A consistent, strategic approach drives sustained, tangible change, providing clear direction at national, local, and individual levels, aligned toward shared goals.

Working groups of key stakeholders within each priority ensures that specialist knowledge is shared and joined up solutions created and monitored.

The overarching SPARC meeting provides a focal point for each of the 5 priority groups to meet and cross group working progressed and cascaded out to the wider rural community.

Each working group will have a partnership lead who will provide the rural priority update at the SPARC meeting.



5 Rural Priorities



Rural machinery, tool, fuel and metal thefts

Police Scotland



Livestock attacks and thefts

NFU Scotland



Heritage crime

Historic Environment Scotland



Rural Fly-tipping

tbc



Equine incidents and thefts

British Horse Society Scotland

Priority updates delivered and driven at SPARC

Key workstreams within each priority

Our key workstreams within each priority are defined as below: through focused working groups, SPARC will be able to target these workstreams with preventions and mitigations, in a measurable and focus manner, under the 4P strategy of Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.



Rural machinery, tool, fuel and metal thefts – (agricultural, forestry and renewables sites)

- Farm, Forestry and Renewables machinery theft
- Quad bike/All-terrain vehicles
- Rural tool theft
- Domestic/commercial fuel and timber theft
- Theft of metal and cabling from renewable energy sites.



Equine incidents and thefts

- Horse, tack and trailer theft
- Horse interference
- Equine road safety



Rural flytipping

- Household and commercial waste
- Waste through organised crime



Livestock crime

- Livestock theft
- Livestock attacks and worrying
- Securing the integrity and safety of food supply chain



Heritage crime

- Illegal metal detecting
- Anti-social behaviour/vandalism leading to damage at historic buildings or monuments
- Theft of cultural and historic artefacts
- Wilful non-reporting and sales of archaeological finds.





Regional delivery via local PARC's

The Local Partnership Against Rural Crime groups (PARC's) have expanded across the country strengthening the focus on preventions, particularly as criminality recognises no borders.

Regardless of any national, regional, local authority or policing boundaries, by developing, maintaining and/or enhancing local PARC's, the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently across these invisible borders has been forged.

This strategy builds on past successes of SPARC, looking to focus on the priorities most affecting rural communities, whilst recognising that importance of the local PARC's in delivering that engagement at a local and regional level.

Increased support to local PARC's from SPARC members is a key priority within this strategy period.

Challenges ahead

Scotland's rural communities and environments face significant changes during this strategy period.

Land use will evolve, driven by green industry and renewable energy targets to meet net-zero goals. Onshore and offshore wind, hydro, solar, tidal, wave energy, green hydrogen, and low-carbon heat will see substantial growth which will increase the machinery, tools and fuel footprint within rural locations.

Offroad driving and anti-social behaviour at new and existing rural location sites continues and preventions and 'target hardening' plays a key role in deterring this behaviour.

Additionally, rising living costs and escalating prices for essentials such as fertilizer, food, and fuel, strain household and business finances, as well as impacting the wellbeing and mental health of the rural community. These pressures also create opportunities for criminal exploitation during this period of change.



Working together

The most effective and key partner in tackling rural crime is you.

The public across rural Scotland care passionately about their communities and businesses and through SPARC the organisations represented and the public can together work towards reducing rural crime in our communities.

By the end of this strategy life cycle, SPARC is focused on achieving:

- Increased confidence in reporting rural crime.
- Increased confidence within rural communities.
- Enhanced sharing of rural crime intelligence with partners and other national enforcement bodies.
- Increased support from SPARC members to regional LPARC events and engagements.

Always dial 999 in an emergency, dial 101 for non-emergencies or go online to report incidents of a non-serious nature via Contact Us Form.

If you know or suspect anyone who is involved in rural crime contact the independent charity Crimestoppers who are 100% anonymous on 0800 555 111.

If you have any information or suspicions about potential food-related crime, call the anonymous Scottish Food Crime Hotline on 0800 028 7926.

If reporting an incident and not sure where you are, remember Police Scotland Area Control Rooms accept the location sharing app "What3words".



SPARC

SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIP AGAINST RURAL CRIME