

Chief Constable
Chief Constable Robert Carden
Police Headquarters
Carleton Hall Penrith,
Cumbria
CA10 2AU



28 March 2025

Dear XXXXXX

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – FOI 290/25

I refer to your request for information received by Cumbria Constabulary on 8 March 2025.
I note you seek access to the following information:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to rural crime incidents recorded by in the past five years, specifically covering the period from 2020 to 2024.



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Rural crime, as defined by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), refers broadly to any crime and anti-social behaviour occurring in rural areas. It often includes incidents linked to Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), targeting rural communities across various crime types such as:

- Organised plant and livestock theft*
- Burglaries targeting firearms*
- Poaching and hare coursing*
- Fuel theft*
- Equine crime (including theft of horses, horse trailers, and tack)*
- Fly tipping, including organised criminal activity related to illegal waste disposal*

Given the definition provided by the CPS and the focus on rural crime as outlined by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Rural Affairs Strategy, I would like to request the following data:

- 1. The total number of rural crime-related incidents recorded between 2020 and 2024, broken down by year.*
- 2. A breakdown of rural crime categories (e.g., plant theft, livestock theft, poaching, equine crime, fuel theft, etc.) for each year in the period requested.*
- 3. Any data regarding the involvement of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) in rural crime incidents, including specific types of crime linked to such groups (e.g., theft of farm machinery, firearms-related burglaries, illegal gambling at hare coursing events, etc.).*
- 4. Any additional statistics related to rural crime prevention, such as arrests, prosecutions, or initiatives implemented by [Police Force Name] in addressing rural crime*

Your request for information has now been considered and I can confirm the information you seek is held by Cumbria Constabulary. However, to provide a response to question 3 of your request, this would require a manual search of all rural crimes to ascertain if there were any links to organised crime groups. I have estimated the time required to extract the relevant information for those years will exceed the "appropriate limit" as this would require a manual review of all relevant entries.

The "appropriate limit" is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 and the current limit for police forces is set at £450, which equates to 18 hours of work.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information, if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request will exceed the appropriate limit. In view of this, and in accordance with Section 17(5) of the Act, this letter serves as a Refusal Notice for your request.

Notwithstanding the above, in anticipation it will still be of interest to you, it is possible to provide you with some of the information requested in the remaining questions, as it was possible to retrieve this information directly. This is information I would otherwise have advised you to submit a revised request to seek disclosure of in accordance with the duty to provide advice and assistance.



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Question 1

Year	Number Of Crimes
2020	11,794
2021	12,063
2022	13,729
2023	12,804
2024	12,662
Total	63,052

Question 2

Acquisitive crime/Arson Criminal Damage covering specific areas:

Year	Fuel	Horse	Machinery	Quad	Sheep	Grand Total
2020	76	24	83	100	49	304
2021	102	20	79	88	40	303
2022	179	13	83	101	35	380
2023	120	15	73	83	26	293
2024	69	13	73	45	32	213
Grand Total	546	85	391	417	182	1493

*Please note these are in **any location**, not just the Rural LSOAs
Also, some crimes may fall under more than one category.*

Quadbikes

Fuel (**Making off without payment has been excluded**)

Machinery over £1000

Sheep

Horse/Equine

Wildlife Crime:

Offence	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Attempt to kill a badger	1					1
Attempt to take a badger	1					1
Cause use of a vehicle to kill / take a wild bird				1		1



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Damage / disturb site of special scientific interest				1		1
Disturb the nesting site of a Schedule 1 wild bird		2				2
Enter land as a trespasser at night with poaching equipment					1	1
Enter land without consent of the owner / occupier in search / pursuit of a deer with intent to take / kill / injure					2	2
Hunting a wild mammal with dogs - Hunting Act 2004	1		4			5
Hunting a wild mammal with dogs - Hunting Act 2004				2		2
Injure a Schedule 1 wild bird	1					1
Interfering with badger setts	1	1				2
Kill a non-Schedule 1 wild bird	1	1		3		5
Killing a Schedule 1 wild bird				1		1
Possess a dead / part of a dead badger	1					1
Trespass on land at night and take / destroy a rabbit or rabbits					2	2
Trespass on land at night and take / destroy game	1					1
Use a firearm / ammunition for the purpose of taking / killing / injuring deer			1			1
Wilfully kill a badger	1	1	4			6
Grand Total	9	5	9	8	5	36

As wildlife offences are generally non-recordable offences, this data comes from our case recording system

As such there are only records when an individual is brought into custody or when a case is made against them.

Records are also only able to be extracted using the decision date (when a charge/caution or no further action is applied) this means records will only appear in the data set if a decision has been made.

Fly Tipping:

Offence	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Depositing, Causing The Deposition Or Permitting The Deposition Of Controlled Special Waste In Or On Land Without A Licence.	1	3	1	3	8
Depositing, Causing The Deposition Or Permitting The Deposition Treating, Keeping Or Disposing Of Controlled (But Not Special) Waste In Or On Land Without A Licence.	5	2	10	7	24
Grand Total	6	5	11	10	32

As fly tipping is primarily covered by the Local Authority, these figures will not



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accurately represent all instances of illegal waste deposition

Please also find attached to this letter details of the search criteria used which may be of assistance to you.

Question 4

We do not hold prosecution data but we can advise that In relation to an initiative, Cumbria Police launched a dedicated rural crime team in September 2023 with the rebranding of Operation Lantern and a new strategy to combat rural crime. This ensures forcewide oversight and cross border collaboration to target both rural acquisitive and wildlife crime under a new set of priorities based on the NPCC strategy.

Police forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data. It should be noted that for these reasons this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.

Whilst every care has been taken in the retrieval of the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact us for clarification, if you do have any issues or queries relating to this data.

Complaint Rights

If you believe your request has not been properly handled, or you are otherwise dissatisfied with the outcome of your request, you have the right to request an internal review.

In the first instance, please email freedomofinformation@cumbria.police.uk quoting the FOI reference number and explain why you are dissatisfied. Your complaint will be considered and a response will be provided to you after your complaint has been investigated.

If you remain dissatisfied following conclusion of the internal review, you have the right, under section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to complain directly to the Information Commissioner.

The address for the Information Commissioner can be found below:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Complaints to the Information Commissioner can also be made online:

[Make a complaint | ICO](#)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in Cumbria Constabulary



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Details of searches done to obtain information provided

1. All crimes committed in Lower Layer Super Output areas described as: Rural town and fringe, Rural town and fringe in a sparse setting, Rural village and dispersed, and Rural village and dispersed in a sparse setting

Lower layer super output areas are as defined by the Office for national statistics

This section returns all crimes with a location in an LSOA described as:

Rural town and fringe OR

Rural town and fringe in a sparse setting OR

Rural village and dispersed OR

Rural village and dispersed in a sparse setting

2. Acquisitive Crimes and Arson/Criminal damage

The data was extracted using an acquisitive crime PBI report which selects certain crimes based on offence group and keyword searches

Offence groups -

Arson and Criminal damage, Burglary, Robbery, Theft Offences and Vehicle Offences which fit into the following categories by way of a keyword search:

Burglary

Robbery

Theft Offences

Vehicle Offences

Keyword searches within the above groups:

Quad Bikes

Search of Crime details and property for quadzilla, polaris (excludes polarised), kymo, can-am outlander 570, can-am outlander 400, yamaha 700, yamaha grizzly 450, yamaha 450, yamaha 500, suzuki 500, suzuki 400, quad, honda 420, honda 500, honda trx 500.

Machinery over £1000

Searches of property records (keyword of farming equipment or machinery plant) where value for that property records is £1000 or above.

Sheep

Searches of property details (keyword of animals or animal – farming) for: checzal, zwartable, shearing, ram (space before), ram (space after), texel, ewe (space before), ewe (space after), sheep, tup, cheviot, beltex, hog (space before), hog (space after), gimmer, mule shearling, herdwicke, swiss valley, texdel, lamb, swaledale (excluded metal sheep hay rack, sheepdog, and sheep dog).

A further query not in the PBI was created searching crimes based on the following keywords:

Horse

Word horse or equine in crime details, crime description or property details - these crime reports were then read for relevance.



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3. Wildlife Crime

From our case recording system for offences occurring under the following legislation:

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Deer Act 1991

Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996

Game Act 1831

Night Poaching Act 1828

Poaching Prevention Act 1862

Hunting Act 2004

S63 and 64 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (hare coursing)

The Conservation of Habitats (1994, 2010 and 2017)

Conservation of Seals 1970

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

4. Fly Tipping

Search of the crime system for offences of:

Depositing, Causing The Deposition Or Permitting The Deposition Of Controlled Special Waste In Or On Land Without A Licence.

Depositing, Causing The Deposition Or Permitting The Deposition Treating, Keeping Or Disposing Of Controlled (But Not Special) Waste In Or On Land Without A Licence.

However, fly tipping is primarily covered by the local authority so this will not cover all incidents occurring.

Please note: A keyword search may not accurately identify all information held by the Constabulary. If, for example, the specific keywords used were recorded in a different field, or if another name or term was used to describe these, any such records would not be identified by the keyword search which has been undertaken.



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