



Here is a snapshot of the work carried out by the Rural Task Force over the last six weeks.

## Rural Theft

A Motorhome was stolen without keys from a compound in Sussex. Victim had tracked his motorhome to Coxheath, Maidstone. The Exact location was given to RTF West Officers and they attended the site and the motorhome was located on a plot at the end of the long drive. The motorhome was lived in and had belongings of a couple. Passport located inside and checks carried out against it and other paperwork and vehicle index plates found inside the vehicle.

Another motorhome was then identified at the same location as stolen. This is a left-hand drive motorhome with bored outdoor lock.

Total value of motorhomes recovered £40k. Investigation on-going.



RTF carried out a joint visit with Medway Council to a site off Wouldham Road. Evidence of burning waste on the site along with storage of vehicles. 2 stolen cars, 1 stolen Motorbike and 1 stolen Caravan located and recovered. Enquiries on-going.



RTF attended a location in the Swale area to try and locate a stolen Suzuki Carry. Stolen Vehicle located on a Plot hidden behind static caravan and vehicle recovered.



RTF supported local policing teams at a Search Warrant at a location in the Swale Area. A Green VW Transporter was in the paddock of one of the plots. Index displayed went down to a white Ford Fiesta where the number plates were stolen between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> June from Gravesend. Vehicle was locked and visible VIN hidden by parking ticket. Access gained and true index identified, and vehicle had been stolen from Broadstairs since 30<sup>th</sup> May and was recovered.



Member of the public whilst tree cutting found items hidden in the undergrowth at Shadoxhurst. The property relates to burglary at Ashford on 27/06/20 of quad, field vacuum and grass topper. Quad already located by Police. Grass topper and jet wash identified by victim and returned. Field cleaner is still outstanding.



RTF made aware of ANPR hits of a Mercedes C220 in the Maidstone area linked to an Aggravated Burglary in the Surrey area in the early hours of Saturday morning. Surrey Police were contacted to gain further information and was informed that 4 males in balaclavas had been to the victims address with weapons and stolen expensive Handbag, Ipad, Car Keys and House Keys. RTF located the vehicle and was followed down Sandling Road where it made off at speed. The vehicle was then located again on Old Chatham Road, Maidstone and vehicle was stopped and 4 persons detained, 2 males and 2 females. The 2 males were both arrested on suspicion of Aggravated Burglary by RTF and taken to Maidstone Custody. Enquires were then made into a second Aggravated Burglary that occurred on 22nd July 2020 at Detling. There was enough evidence to suggest the involvement of the 2 males in this second offence so both males were further arrested for this offence.

RTF were tasked to arrest an identified suspect for the recent spate of equine related thefts. Officers attended the home address of the suspect, but he was not located on the site. Officers remained in the area and later spotted a vehicle linked to the male, it was stopped and the wanted male was one of the three males inside the vehicle and he was arrested.



RTF Officers located a twin axle Ifor Williams Trailer partially hidden on a piece of waste land. Enquiries were made with Ifor Williams and it was established that the trailer had been stolen from an owner in Sussex in January 2019. Trailer recovered and returned to owner.



Distinctive Metal gates were stolen from the Country Park near to Faversham overnight on the 14/15 July. The gates were circulated through Heritage and Farm Watch requesting the rural community be on the lookout for them and to report any information to the Rural Task Force. They are still outstanding.



RTF Officers attended a location following a tracker activation on a stolen 125cc motorbike. A wider search conducted of woodland and fields around the site. Two scooters located in woodland opposite the site and recovered for examination as suspected stolen.



RTF asked to assist West Division CID to locate and arrest a male for conspiracy to steal in relation to multiple offences between March 2019 and July 2019. Whilst on-route to suspects home address, he was observed driving a Nissan X-Trail on Rochester Road, Burham. Suspect was stopped and arrested for that offence and driving whilst disqualified/no insurance. Vehicle seized.

A white Vauxhall Insignia was located parked in Caxton Lane, Hadlow. The vehicle was insecure and was searched. The visible VIN in the window matched the index displayed. The engine was checked, and the stamped VIN was different to the one displayed in the window. This VIN was checked and the correct index for the vehicle was established. This is shown as a stolen vehicle from Sittingbourne on 8/11/2017 and was seized.

Whilst patrolling the rural lanes of Fordwich, PC Perry's attention drawn towards 69 registered BMW with two male occupants. PC Perry attempted to stop the vehicle, but it made off at speed onto the A28. Due to the dangerous way the BMW was being driven; PC Perry terminated the pursuit. An area search was conducted, and the BMW was later found abandoned in Fordwich. The BMW was seized for examination and quantity of cash seized.



RTF officers located a stolen vehicle parked at Newnham Court Inn, Bearsted. Believed to be linked to crime series where Land Rovers are being stolen in West Kent.



## Op Galileo/Poaching

RTF assisted local patrols who had stopped person suspected to be hare coursing. Location is near to Morrisons Petrol Station Isle of Sheppey. They travelled in a black Nissan Terrano. This vehicle has been previously used by another Op Galileo target. This was parked in the Morrisons car park near to the railings. The males had the following dogs a cream coloured lurcher and wired haired large build terrier cream with brown right ear x2 tan and white long-legged Jack Russell, a nearly all white Jack Russell with brown ears. Black and brown Terrier and x 2 puppy Jack Russells black and white and brown and white. Only the lurcher and black and brown terrier were on a lead. All males were searched. There was insufficient evidence to link them to an offence of poaching and they were told to leave the area.



RTF attended a report of hare coursing at Higham Rochester. Offender's drove their Subaru Impreza across a field, but it was too wet, and the vehicle got stuck. Offender's fled on foot leaving the vehicle to be seized by RTF. Unfortunately, the owner never registered the vehicle, so it had to be recycled.



Whilst on rural patrol officers sighted a male in a field with a lurcher dog. Male was stopped and searched and identified from Maidstone area. Male was anti police. Further information received that another male was with him in a Silver BMW. In insufficient evidence of a poaching offence though intelligence submitted on stopped male and BMW vehicle.

A Game Keeper contacted RTF Officers after he found 22 dead Pheasants (Value £1,000) along Manns Hill in the morning. The Birds were trailed along the length of the road in what appeared to have been a deliberate act. It is suspected that the Offender may have been a builder in a blue van working close to the location, however there is no direct evidence to link it. Enquiries are in hand to identify the vehicle and builder.



RTF attended a report of a blue Honda CRV poaching in the area of Stalisfield. A blue Honda CRV with 5 male occupants was located on Waterditch Road, Lenham. The vehicle and all persons searched under Poaching Prevention Act. Within the vehicle officers found several dead partridges, large number of ball bearings, powerful torches and slingshots. One of the males admitted to killing the birds with a catapult; he was reported for summons for poaching offences.



PC Perry responded to a report of 6 to 8 males in two 4x4 vehicles hare coursing in fields around Adisham. PC Perry located a silver Mitsubishi L200 and Toyota Rav4 in a field. However, upon seeing the marked police vehicle both made off at speed on to Aylesham Road throwing two dead hares from the vehicle.

Due to increase in hare coursing reports the Rural Task Force converged in the area of Wingham. The team located two Suzuki Jimnys driving around Palm Tree Lane and Ratling shining high powered torches across the fields. On contact with the RTF both Suzuki's made off. The RTF pursued the Suzuki's but the offenders began blinding the officers by shining their high powered torches at the officers forcing them to back off. One of the Jimnys decamped in Hyde Place, Aylesham. Officers conducted an area search but could not locate the offenders. The second Jimny was pursued into the village of Barham where it went off road across fields forcing the pursuit to be terminated.

Inside the abandoned Jimny was 2 dogs and 2 dead hares. Both the dogs and hares were DNA swabbed before being seized. The Jimny was also seized and subsequently forensically examined by CSI. Awaiting update from results.



## Wildlife

RTF Officer responded to a reports of Illegal Cockle fishing in progress at Marine Parade Sheerness where they located two males on the beach whose details were obtained. Neither could remember where they lived in London. One stated they were staying with his Uncle at an address in Sheerness. Status of both males were checked with Immigration and both males entered UK illegally so both arrested and conveyed to Medway Custody.

RTF West Officers received a report that a homeless male was illegally trapping birds in Detling. They attended and examined the reported traps no evidence to support that illegal trapping taking place.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020 Immigration Officers, Food Standards Agency, IFCA and RTF patrolled Isle of Sheppey as part of a pre-planned day of action to support Op Sealion, removal of shellfish from coastline. There were no sightings of illegal harvesting of shellfish. Officers spoke to resident in a campervan in a layby in Shellness. He sighted 6 Chinese males and females at 0500 in the morning who arrived in a grey Toyota. Informant told them to go or he'll call police the occupants shortly left.

RTF officers received a report of two sea gull fledglings being deliberately run over in Tram Road car park, Folkestone by an Audi A3. The report originated from a web cam video that had been posted on Kent Online and had drawn national media attention. The footage was not clear enough to identify the vehicle's registration, however a Folkestone ANPR camera captured the vehicle minutes after the incident. RTF officer's PC Callaghan and PC Sutton attended the Audi's registered keepers home address and conducted an interview under caution. Investigation ongoing.



RTF contacted in relation to two deceased buzzards. One was located at Christmas time 2019 and the other located on 23/07/2020 in rural area just outside Sittingbourne. Both deceased birds had been frozen. Birds seized for potential further investigation. Informant also stated that he is finding numerous deceased animals around his fields including Seagulls, around 25 Crows and in the winter, Cormorants were being shot too. Arrangements in hand to x-ray the two deceased buzzards to establish cause of death. Investigation on-going.



RTF attended the area following a call from a Resident reporting a Peregrine Falcon, had been shot and killed. On speaking to the informant, she stated she was in her Garden when she heard a pop and the Falcon landed on her drive. The bird was dead on impact and had an injury consistent with an Air Weapon. Three further shots were heard, which she described as an Air Weapon. No persons were seen and due to the high tree lines in the area it was difficult to say where they had come from other than in the direction of Pie Alley Lane. CSI were liaised with and it was established that there were no forensic opportunities in respect of DNA or fingerprints on the pellet in the Bird. The only evidence would be if the pellet was compared to a weapon, however there is no evidence to suggest who was involved.



RTF attended an address after concerns raised following a Folkestone VIT investigation that a Suspect kept a Harris Hawk on the roof of the pub with the landlord's permission. The Hawk is kept on the roof of the toilets out of the way of the public and is correctly secured with access to water. A Harris Hawk can be kept under the General Licence conditions controlled by Natural England. Natural England and National Wildlife crime unit contacted for clarification. No offences.



## Animal Welfare

Member of Public reported an 18-year-old male next door had been shooting all types of wild birds in his garden and hers. She stated that he does this for 2 to 3 hours in the morning after his father gone to work. Father spoken to on the phone and appointment made for officers to visit and seize air weapon. Father assured his son would stop shooting the gun at home immediately.

RTF Officers attended field in the Hartlip area regarding concerns for welfare of horse. Horse located and examined by Vet and found to have broken leg. Due to the severity of the injury it was put to sleep. Two other horses at the location were recovered by the RSPCA. It was deemed by the attending Vet that the two horses still alive were likely still at risk to suffer so were taken in possession by Police to be cared for by the RSPCA.

Informant reporting her elderly neighbour firing a Catapult at an active Seagull Nest on his roof and using laser sights at Pigeons on her shed. She believes he has been firing an air weapon towards them as several pellets have been found in her garden. The suspect is elderly male (in his 80's) who was spoken to by the RTF in January 2020, after he shot a pigeon and it landed in the informant's garden. At the time she didn't want to give a statement and due to his age, it was decided that the matter would be dealt with by getting him to voluntarily hand over his air weapon and ammunition for destruction, which he did. Enquiries are in hand with the local PCSO and CSU at Dover regarding his behaviour and a follow up visit will be conducted by the RTF.

RTF officers were asked to support RSPCA to visit a Traveller Temporary Encampment in Broadstairs following a report that they had caged wild birds. The site was checked and there was no evidence of the allegations.

RTF sent to a report of 2 loose horses at Dartford on a roundabout heading towards the M25. Officers attended and found the horses. An owner could not be located at the scene so the horses were recovered. Owner has since contacted Kent Police and paid the recovery cost to get their horses returned.

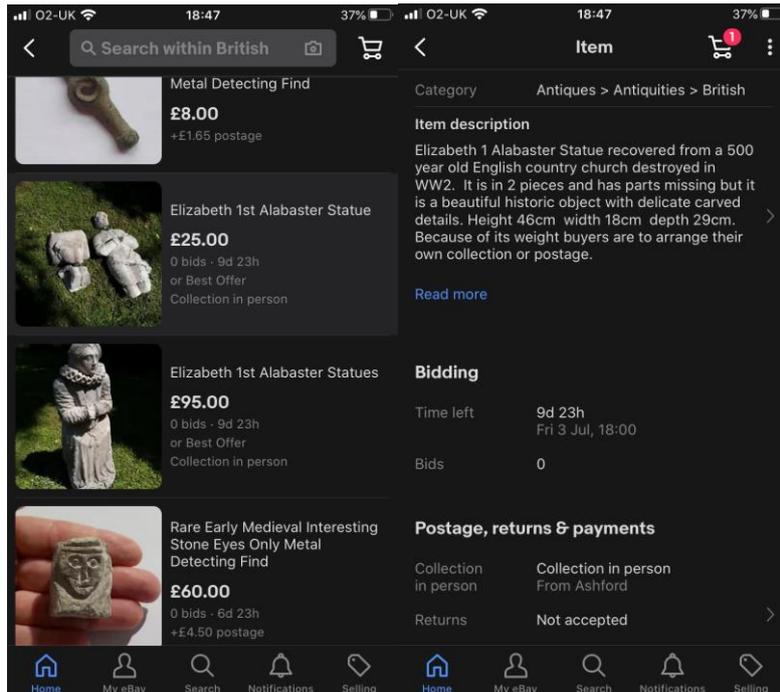


## Heritage

RTF West officers located metal detectorists on farmland at Allington near to Maidstone. They are part of an online you tube group of detectorists and showed officer some of the finds which have been found today and others subsequently handed to Maidstone Museum. Landowner had given permission for them to be on his land.



The Rural Task Force were contacted by The Finds Liaison Officer - Heritage Conservation for Kent County Council, after he was made aware of two statues being sold on Ebay. It was suspected they may have come from St Mary's at Little Chart, Ashford, which was hit by a doodlebug bomb in 1944 and therefore remains property of the Church.



RTF carried out enquiries and identified the seller and attended the sellers address in the Ashford area and spoke to the seller. It transpired the items had already been sold to an Antiques Collector in London. The statues had been brought from an auction at Ashford Market in 2004 and along with ten tea chest full of rubble from Ashford Borough Council and therefore there was no dis-honestly linked to the possession and subsequent sale of the statues.

Report of two males trespassing on land metal detecting at Reculver. The farmer confronted the males who quickly left. The farmer has noticed recently an increase in holes being dug near to Reculver. Suspect vehicle possibly identified. Enquiries on-going.

## Op Assist/Fly Tipping

RTF conducted an Op Assist with Maidstone Borough Council Waste Enforcement Team on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. During the day 3 vehicles were seized linked to fly tipping offences and another vehicle was seized in Headcorn for Disqualified driving and No insurance and driver reported.

RTF attended an address in Northfleet with Maidstone Borough Council's Waste Enforcement Team. Parked outside was a grey Fiat Punto that had been identified as being used in several fly tips in the Maidstone area and was seized by Maidstone Borough Council.



RTF conducted another Op Assist with Maidstone Borough Council Waste Enforcement Team on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July. During the day 2 vehicles were seized linked to fly tipping offences, 4 Fixed Penalties Notices were issued, and 1 Driver was dealt with for not having any Insurance.



Officers conducted an Op Assist at Swale with Local Council Environmental Enforcement Officer on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020. Numerous vehicles stopped during operation and advice given to some users around waste carriers licence.



Officers conducted an Op Assist at Canterbury with Local Council Environmental Enforcement Officer on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020. Several vehicles stopped but no offences identified by Canterbury council.



RTF Patrol stopped a Green Honda CRV on the A49 at Maidstone. The vehicle was carrying garden waste. The occupants gave conflicting accounts regarding possession of the waste. They are unable to produce a Waste Carrier Licence or Transfer Notice. The patrol liaised with Maidstone Borough Council and the vehicle and its trailer were seized.



Officers conducted an Op Assist at Dover with Local Council Environmental Enforcement Officer on the 6th August 2020. Several vehicles stopped and 4 Legal Notices were given by the Council for Waste carrying Offences and one Warning. As part of the Operation RTF attended a field behind a residential address. The Farmer was seen with RTF Officer and DDC Enforcement Officer. A resident has built a patio behind a new shed and the clearings from the area has been throw over the side of the fence into farmers field, including metal re-enforcing rod which went through their combine and caused hundreds of pounds of damage. Allegation to be investigated by DDC.





RTF Officers conducted an Op Assist at Thanet with Local Council Environmental Enforcement Officer on the 11th August 2020. Several vehicles stopped resulting in 3 vehicle seizures for the offence of No Insurance, 1 Driver reported for no Vehicle Tax and 2 FPN's and 1 Producer Document issued by Environmental Enforcement Officers: -



Informant contacted RTF via Farm Watch reporting he saw the occupants of a blue Ford Fiesta, fly tip at the location. Checks conducted and details passed onto Environmental Enforcement Team at Dover District Council.



RTF Officers conducted an Op Assist at Canterbury with Local Council Environmental Enforcement Officer on the 26th August 2020. Numerous vehicles nominated to ANPR and some vehicle stops took place however RTF Officer had to deal with a serious RTC involving a car and 2 pedestrians at Island Road, Canterbury that they came across which resulted in the OP being cancelled.



## Other Business

Whilst RTF Officers were working with Op Raptor County lines team in the Folkestone area they spotted ANPR activation on county line drugs vehicle. Vehicle sighted and stopped. 2 persons arrested by Op Raptor for being concerned in the supply of drugs, about £2000 in cash seized and RTF Officers assisted with vehicle and drugs wipe.

Direct call to team phone regarding a suspicious vehicle seen in Wrotham Water Road, Trottscliffe over the past week. Vehicle described as in a poor state of repair and with a smashed rear windscreen covered by plastic sheeting. Further call reporting the vehicle was currently in the location. Vehicle located with driver. Strong smell of cannabis from the vehicle and driver became obstructive towards officers. Detained for a drug search and threatened to headbutt officers. Male was then arrested for assault on Police and S4 Public Order. Also spat blood in cell van and caused damaged in custody. Has been charged with Assault on an Emergency Worker and Criminal Damage and bailed to Court. Car searched and scales and cannabis grinder located but no drugs. Vehicle seized for no insurance.

RTF Officers were tasked to locate and arrest a male who was wanted for 2 Domestic Abuse Harassment offences in that he was stalking his ex-partner and threatening to place onto the internet intimate photos of the victim. The male was located at his home address and arrested.

A vehicle was stopped by an RTF patrol at Scragged Oak Lane, Detling towing a trailer. It appeared to evade the patrol and the index plate on the trailer did not match the vehicle. When stopped there were two males inside the vehicle. The driver made off into some nearby woods and was lost. The area was contained, and Air Support and Dog Units attended but the male could not be located. Vehicle he made off from was searched and a small amount of herbal cannabis located and a suspected stolen power tool. Enquiries have since identified the male who is a Disqualified Driver. Actions in hand to locate and deal with this male.

RTF attended a Farm and spoke to the Victim who reported Arson on his Farm, whereby a Derelict Cattle Shed / Barn was burnt down. KFRS attended the location around 0400 hours in the morning following a report of a building having been deliberately set on fire. The building itself is in a wooded area in Littlebourne, Canterbury. The building is around 60' x 20' in size with feeding areas along its length and a small generator shed at the side. The building is not currently in use. Due to the fire the building has suffered significant damage, causing the collapse of the roof. The damage to the building has been estimated by the Victim at £30,000 (Thirty Thousand Pounds). Crime Report submitted.



Land Rover Defender was stopped A20 near Tudor Park. Vehicle defects included defective rear side lights, defective and damaged rear light clusters, defective front main beams, defective indicators, dangerous protruding body panels. The bonnet was held down by a tow rope and all its internal plastics and wiring were damaged and exposed. A VRDS (Vehicle Defect Rectification Scheme) was issued and the vehicle was escorted back to owners' address approximately 2 miles from the stop location where it will remain until fixed and the VRDS conditions complied with.



Rural Task Force attended address in Teynham, to try and locate an Orange Land Rover Discovery. This vehicle is the offending vehicle for £4000 of criminal damage report where this vehicle was witnessed driving across crop land on London Road, Teynham in Early Hours of the 28<sup>th</sup> July. Vehicle was not located.

RTF officers tasked by Force Incident Manager (FIM) to effect arrest of suspect for a sexual offence that occurred in Essex. Suspect had been identified by enquiries as a gas worker working in victims house whereby, she was assaulted by the suspect. Suspect located and taken to Margate Custody where evidential non-intimate swabs were obtained by RTF on behalf of Essex.

British Transport Police (BTP) reporting a male wearing only shorts causing damage to train in Broadstairs. He then escaped and tried to interfere with live track, subsequently went on a rampage with varying reports by the public of this male with a metal pole. The male with the same metal pole reported assaulting a farmer and hitting a tractor and then attempting to car jack a vehicle pulling the elderly female out of the front seat. PC Perry and SF Units attended where taser was drawn and the male arrested by Pc Perry. Male taken to Hospital as suspected to of having Acute behavioural disorder. PC Perry carried out a fingerprint scanning for identification. The male later stated he had been to a rave where he had taken Psychoactive drugs which caused his ABD. He was subsequently charged with 15 offences and remanded to court the next day.

Moped seen being ridden by two males, one with helmet one without. Vehicle followed for approximately 1 mile and then came to a natural stop in traffic. When approached by officer, the passenger has decamped on foot and the bike has mounted the pavement and made off.



A Grey Peugeot 307 was seen driving erratically under the A249 at Bobbing, Sittingbourne. Vehicle was stopped outside a Farm at Bobbing. Driver was identified as a Bulgarian National living at the Farm as he was a Seasonal worker. Male had a Bulgarian Licence but did not have insurance, so he was reported, and vehicle seized.



A black Honda CRV was stop checked at the Park Gate Inn, A20, Leeds. Also, in the vehicle unrestrained was a male child aged approximately 2 years of age. The vehicle was parked next to a red Mercedes A180. Details of the driver of both vehicles were recorded and verified. The driver of Mercedes stated he owned the Honda and that the other driver was taking it for a test drive. The Honda was uninsured and though the owner stated that he had a Traders Insurance Policy for it, however, this would only cover him if he was in the car with the other driver. Due to this the vehicle was seized and driver of the Honda was issued with a TOR (Traffic Offence Report).

Report of possible light aircraft crash next to M25, Swanley. RTF attended area and assisted TD with area search, but nothing located. Possible that this was a remote-control model aircraft.

Moped rider stopped on Sutton Park Road, Maidstone, after bike was seen leaving Headcorn. Vehicle stop revealed back tyre was bald. Reported for this offence.



Domestic Abuse suspect located at an address in Herne Bay and arrested by RTF officers and conveyed to Canterbury Custody. Offence was Stalking and Controlling and Coercive Behaviour.

RTF North Officers were tasked to locate a male wanted on an FTA (Fail To Appear) Warrant in the Medway area. After enquiries were made over 2 days the male was located sleeping rough in the area of Riverside Country park. Male was arrested and taken to Medway Police Station to be processed.

RTF were patrolling the area of Hollingbourne after receiving numerous reports of illegal dirt bikes being ridden on roads and fields in the area. One bike located and stopped. The rider was reported for traffic offences and issued with Section 59 Warning for anti-social use of a vehicle.



RTF deployed with the Drone for Operation Invisible with Canterbury CSU, CPT and the MOD relating to off-road Bikes, in the areas of MOD land in and around Canterbury on the 28<sup>th</sup> August.



RTF Specials carried out a SpeedWatch tasking at North Street, Sutton Vallance. 4 vehicles stopped in a 30-mph zone for excess speed. 1 driver given words of advice 3 drivers issued with Traffic Offence Reports for 39mph, 41mph and 42mph.



# Court Results

Kent Police in partnership working with the RSPCA pursued an investigation to identify and deal with a group of males that trained and used their dogs to attack Badgers and other wildlife. This investigation has resulted in the execution of several search warrants at the suspects addresses. One suspect has previously been convicted at Court and was given a custodial sentence in addition to other sanctions. Two further suspects from this investigation series have now attended Court with the following sentences. These outcomes highlight the severity of the acts carried out by those responsible and sends out a clear message from the Courts that such cruelty will not be tolerated. A further suspect from this same investigation will be sentenced in September

## **Mark McWilliam sentenced to :-**

1. 120 days imprisonment concurrent on all counts;
2. Deprived of Poppy, Tia and Ollie;
3. Disqualified from owning any animal under the full terms of 34(2), (3) and (4); and
4. £2,000 contribution towards costs because he is unable to work.

## **Jethro Smith sentenced to :-**

1. 120 days concurrent on all 3 imprisonable charges;
2. No separate penalty on the Hunting Act charge;
3. Deprived of Biscuit;
4. Disqualified from owning any animal under the full terms of 34(2) and (4) for life; and
5. £4,450 contribution towards costs.

Kind regards, Darren Walshaw

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