

Police Scotland launch new initiative to tackle rural vehicle and equipment theft

A new initiative to tackle rural vehicle and equipment theft is being rolled out within Scotland.

Police Scotland will provide farming communities with a specially designed, waterproof sticker that can be displayed on tractors, excavators, and other rural machinery, encouraging police to stop them to verify ownership and permitted use during set hours where the machinery is not routinely used by the owners.

This will ensure anyone illegally in possession of the vehicle on the road network is more quickly identified and arrested.

Each month Police Scotland's Rural and Acquisitive Crime Team compile a report of rural crime, and it has found that in Scotland, in particular, the Borders, along with areas in the North of England experience between £250,000 and £400,000 worth of rural vehicle machinery, tools vehicle theft each month.

Officers have worked alongside colleagues from the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC) and Northumbria, Durham and Cumbria Constabularies, to design the sticker, which will be offered to rural communities free of charge, either during engagement at their properties, from their local officers or when police attend agricultural events within the division.

Inspector Jordan Low from Police Scotland's Rural, Acquisitive and Business Preventions team said: "We know that the theft of farming vehicles and machinery can have a significant financial impact on rural communities and alongside SPARC and our neighbouring English Constabularies, we have introduced this new sticker scheme to identify more easily those responsible for such offences which will complement existing cross-border partnership work already taking place.

"Road Policing Officers and their local policing colleagues have been made aware of the scheme and throughout the course of their duties, should they come across a vehicle displaying one, they will stop and check the vehicle and driver ensure anyone driving is legally permitted to do so.

"We are committed to tackling rural crime in all its forms and will continue to work alongside our key partners and the farming industry to explore any and all opportunities to reduce these offences and bring those responsible to justice."