



Herman Goldstein Award Submission 2023

OP LYRIC

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OP LYRIC - SUMMARY

SCANNING

From spring 2020 there was an increase in burglaries, businesses and residential in County Durham.

Specifically, South locality was highlighted, notably across the Crook and Weardale areas.

A high percentage of these burglaries relate to farm premises with commercial quad bikes being targeted.

Data shows that 55% of this type of crime was occurring within rural Weardale and Teesdale, covering 477 square miles.

ANALYSIS

The increased crime was believed a direct result of COVID-19 which led to a significant reduction in availability of quads and parts on the secondhand market. Farmers in Weardale and Teesdale were not security conscious, premises appeared easy targets due to their location and buildings/equipment not being secured with quads easily accessible with keys in the ignition. The farms are usually in isolated locations, not overlooked by neighbouring properties, very rarely are there any external security lights/any other target hardening in place.

RESPONSE

An Operational order was created to allow dedicated staff to be deployed, to provide a policing presence in rural areas, conducting appropriate stop checks on persons and vehicles of interest and utilising stop search powers where reasonable grounds exist.

Funding was released from Weardale and Teesdale AAP to purchase 10 bespoke tracker devices which are discreetly installed in quads across various locations. These can be redeployed dependant upon information and review.

They include a subscription for 24/7 monitoring from the supplier and use geo-fencing which is set for the location and an agreed deployment process created should a theft occur.

Increase community contacts in rural areas and develop methods for sharing of information, primarily using the WhatsApp digital platform.

ASSESSMENT

Between January 2020 and May 2020 there were 14 crimes recorded. Op lyric began June 2020 to May 2021 this figure was reduced to 13 crimes for the whole year. There has been an overall reduction in crime and incidents which has reduced demand on Police. There were a number of successful arrests and prosecutions.

The WhatsApp group had several successful results, without which it would have been impossible to solve the crime and recover the stolen property. Due to the teamworking ethic brought on by the relationships between Rural Watch and police there has been a reduction in crime and a significant increase in confidence within the community.

Partnership working with the National Farmers Union (NFU) insurance led to incentives of a 12% discount being offered to the owners of quads, who would agree to tracker installations.

WORD COUNT 399

OP LYRIC – DESCRIPTION

SCANNING

The immediate problem facing police were burglaries involving the theft of quad bikes within the South Locality of Durham, predominantly the rural areas of Teesdale and Weardale. This operation was created in response to the ongoing crimes. If a farm quad is stolen, it is very likely that this will have a much greater impact upon the victim, due to the nature of their business and lifestyle.

Confidence within rural communities had reduced and members of the public were failing to report matters to police directly. It was becoming difficult to manage the expectations of the community. See Figure 1, Appendix A, showing a news article from the BBC stating rural farmers felt like sitting ducks.

Practically we already had a useful tool at our disposal – Rural/ farm watch who are a group of volunteers who are happy to come out and help the Police with planned nights of action or at a moment's notice. The difficulty would be finding a way to make Rural Watch better, more efficient in assisting the Police and improving community confidence.

Farm Watch was started in 1989 by Peter Stubbs and other members of the farming community. Peter Stubbs is a well-respected and trusted farmer in Teesdale which led to the scenario where people were calling him direct to report incidents rather than reporting direct to the Police. This meant that Police received the reports third hand, missing key information and often not in a timely manner.

Scanning was undertaken of police crimes (theft, burglary and vehicle crime) that occurred between 01/01/2020 and 17/05/2020 and contained the key word 'quad' in the modus text. This revealed 40 crimes which met the specified criteria, see Figure 2 (Appendix A), showing the 40 crimes plotted on

a map of County Durham. Whilst, Table 1, Appendix B, provides a breakdown of quad bike crimes demonstrating that Burglary Business (15) was the most prevalent crime type.

Table 2, Appendix B, shows the breakdown of the 40 quad crimes within the force area by locality. This shows that 55% (22) of the 40 crimes committed within the force area occurred in the South Durham locality. Of the 22 location/premises in the South locality where quads were stolen, 16 were stolen from farms (10 x Crook, 4 x Bishop Auckland, 2 x Barnard Castle) suggesting a factor worthy of examination in analysis phase.

Looking more closely at South Durham Locality the area of Crook was identified as a hot spot location with more than half (12) of the 22 crimes occurring in that area, see Table 2, Appendix B. The crimes in the Crook area are circled in red, on Figure 3 appendix A, showing their close proximity to each other (red dots reflect crimes that occurred in close succession in May 2020).

Looking further into the 12 crimes in Crook it became apparent that the Police beat areas of BC1 Sunnybrow/Hunwick (4 crimes) and B1D Willington/Oakenshaw (3 crimes) were key hot spot areas. Two of the crimes that occurred in Crook were repeat victims.

Time weighted analysis was conducted on the 22 crimes in the South locality which indicated there was a high probability of them occurring between midnight and 3am, see table 4, Appendix A. With Mondays (6 crimes) and Sundays (5) being the most prevalent days. However, data suggested that for the area of Crook Saturday was also a probable night, see table 5 (Appendix A).

ANALYSIS

Analysis was undertaken, utilising a number of police systems which captures information from the initial call for service, to the point of investigation resolution. This data alongside Open source data from media outlets was examined via the lens of the Problem Analysis Triangle - Victim, Offender and Location, see figure 6, appendix A.

This showed that farm premises in the Weardale and Teesdale areas appeared to be “easier targets” due to their rural and isolated locations. From speaking to several local farmers in the area, some of which were victims of quad bike thefts, it was clear that from a crime prevention standpoint at least, they had taken a much more relaxed approach to target hardening.

Equipment and vehicles were not secured and were easily accessible. On some occasions keys were even left inside the ignition making it easy to steal with a rapid getaway for opportunistic thieves. With the farm buildings being so isolated, having no CCTV and being surrounded by fields leading to footpaths and onto arterial routes that border neighbouring counties such as Cumbria and Northumbria, it was far too easy to commit rural crime and make good their escape.

The market for used quad bikes in good working condition at the time (values according to Autotrader bikes) was around the £4,000 – £5,000 mark, making it a lucrative market with little risk given the factors mentioned. Indeed, in May 2020 the Farmers Weekly¹ reported

¹ <https://www.fwi.co.uk/news/coronavirus-advice-issued-to-tackle-quad-bike-thefts>

that thieves were taking advantage of quiet times created by lockdown to target quad bikes and urged farming communities to take action to avoid being caught out. However, in reality whilst Covid restrictions had heightened the risks of theft, the market for quads is well established and the issues around the location and accessibility are long standing.

A further issue existed that farmers were aware that insurance companies would replace the quad bikes with minimal delays meaning that whilst they found the losses frustrating and criticised Police for lack of action some farmers continued to leave keys in their quads making them easy targets.

However, from the discussions officers have had with local farmers it was clear that the thefts had left them feeling disengaged and let down by police. It was imperative that police reacted to this crime trend.

Historically there had been previous sporadic increases in this type of crime. Police normally responding to this by short term measures; mainly increasing police presence in the area, however this was not sustainable and reduced once the number of crimes dissipated. Ultimately criminals returned after police activity subsided and further crimes would start to occur.

The offenders on these occasions are generally low-level thieves, working on behalf of Organised Crime Groups probably receiving a small amount of cash in hand or potentially drugs as reward.

As previously stated, the market for second hand quad bikes had seen a sudden increase from around £2,500 - £4,000 in 2019 to £4,000 - £5,000 in 2020 - this was due to a restriction in the market caused by COVID lockdown restrictions.

Locations were isolated farm buildings within rural County Durham, these premises were often surrounded by nothing but empty fields and close to county roads that lead out of area onto other neighbouring counties/forces.

Targets were isolated farm buildings; these premises have little to no security systems in place and quad bikes were often stored in unsecured side buildings with key in ignition and full tanks of fuel.

Analysis led to the development of the following hypotheses:

- 1) Increased crime as a direct result of COVID-19. Due to the necessary Government restrictions of movement, there has been a significant reduction in the availability of quad bikes on the second hand market. This has resulted in criminals taking advantage and targeting rural premises in order to steal quads, which are subsequently sold on, often to unsuspecting buyers.

- 2) Organised crime groups targeting the Weardale and Teesdale areas due to the large number of farm premises and rural locations, making the area a more viable target than those in built up, populated areas.

- 3) Farm premises in the Weardale and Teasdale areas are 'easier targets' as the equipment is not secured and easily accessible.

RESPONSE

Based on the results of the analysis Operation Lyric was developed, this included:

Short term response -

- To deploy officers to the specific locations, at key times in order to conduct patrols and identify suspicious vehicles and any persons of interest.

- Officers to be deployed double crewed, in possession of full PPE with both marked and unmarked police vehicles into the area. Ideally officers using marked police vehicles are to be Initial Pursuit trained and using suitable patrol vehicle. This will provide initial contingency should a vehicle fail to stop. Should this situation arise, then immediate contact to be made with control room, for safe management and authorisation of pursuit, pending tactical support being utilised.

- Officers utilising unmarked police vehicles; when identifying suspicious vehicle, are to request assistance from a marked unit in order to safely stop the vehicle to conduct appropriate checks.
- To conduct appropriate stop checks, and where reasonable grounds exists conduct PACE 1 stop searches of persons and vehicles. Officers to capture such engagement on Body Worn Video and to use GOWISELY.
- Road Policing Unit (RPU) officers will also be deployed during operation. RPU vehicles to take up static positions on main roads, on the outer boundary of the area. This will allow for a coordinated response when unmarked units identify suspicious vehicles.
- Dedicated staff identified for deployment on the operation, this removing the chances of staff being diverted to other incidents.

Long term response - Tracker installations

- This proposes a long-term solution in the form of electronic tracker devices which have the capability of being covertly installed on quad bikes and other machinery. If an attempt is made to steal the vehicle the tracker device automatically activates,

alerting police. This allows for a rapid police response, in order to apprehend the thieves and recover the property.

- By introducing the trackers, we will not only benefit residents in the short term by target hardening valuable property and equipment, but also assist in potential recovery should it be stolen. They could also prove vital in identifying suspects and gathering intelligence. In the future this project may provide a longer-term response, and where possible feature in crime prevention material and be a deterrent for criminals.
- It is a possibility that finances could be sourced via a grant application to the local Area Action Partnership (AAP). If successful, the money for this project will be used entirely to purchase a quantity of the electronic tracker devices. They will be deployed by police using information and intelligence to identify potentially vulnerable targets. The trackers are reusable with the ability to redeploy them into other areas and farms once a problem has been solved. Thus, making them value for money.
- The tracking equipment provider is local company and recognised by Durham Constabulary as suitable provider with a proven track record of supplying similar equipment to other police forces.
- As an incentive for farmers using tracker device some insurance companies will offer a 12% discount on policies where trackers are installed. Making the likelihood of

recovering stolen property much greater giving us pin-point locations. This provides an incentive to farmers to protect their equipment and target harden.

Crime Prevention and Target Hardening.

- Develop a media strategy incorporating the 'NUDGE' theory, in order to promote crime prevention advice and encourage residents and farmers to secure their property and as stated install the trackers, in addition this makes it less appealing for criminals to target them.

WhatsApp/Rural Watch

- When first suggested in 2018 that a WhatsApp group may be the way forward to help the sharing of information, we were understandably met with resistance. "Why change something that has worked for 30 years"? Several members didn't like the idea of a digital platform; however, we (police) and other members had a vision of continuous improvement.

The group started off very small with encouragement and people seeing the great work that was going on momentum grew, and people were asking to be involved. It quickly became clear that this system was going to be a success. It has even encouraged younger members of the community to become interested and involved in Rural Watch.

Setting up a WhatsApp group was a way to reconnect and modernise how we interact with the Rural Community; this has helped raise confidence and partnership working. Rural Watch volunteers come out on nights of action and act as our eyes and ears. Communication has always been via radio, that were at best patchy and were not a reliable way of communication, especially given the geography of the area. We found an app called Zello which is a free walkie-talkie software programme which enables clear precise communication at the touch of a button between Police and volunteers, to ensure the safety of all the volunteers.

The group has allowed us to reach people who wouldn't normally engage with in the community and has helped recruit new volunteers to come out on the nights of action. The number of young people involved in Rural Watch and volunteering has significantly increased this is due to us embracing modern technology.

The WhatsApp group allows the community to share information with each other and local Police. It takes away the demand factor for the Police to cascade out any information. The WhatsApp group allows the rural community who can be quite isolated to share information and for them to feel included. The group is run by the members, and we monitor it.

ASSESSMENT

There have been numerous success stories since the launch of Operation LYRIC; one particular incident took place on 20th May 2021, where a quad bike was stolen in the Upper Dales and it took 37 minutes from the theft occurring to a male being arrested and the quad being recovered.

The victim put out an alert on the rural WhatsApp group that the quad had been stolen and within minutes messages started coming in, reporting live sightings. The great thing about the group is that we get to know what is happening instantly, thus enabling officers to track the location of the quad. It was located at Whorlton, a small village some 20 miles away from where the Quad was stolen and where the male was arrested, and the quad recovered.

This is a great way of showing how effective the group is and how communities and Police working together can achieve results. Without this group the outcome we achieved would have been a lot different and the chances of us retrieving the stolen quad would be minimal.

If we didn't have the group, the time lost calling the incident in and waiting for the job to be allocated would have been costly.

The male has now been to court and pleaded guilty to taking a vehicle without consent, driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence, having no insurance and failing to stop for police. He was fined £880, given six penalty points and ordered to pay court and CPS costs.

A fantastic result achieved by teamwork.

Indeed, Table 4 appendix B, shows that following implementation of Op Lyric in May 2020 levels of quad thefts in the South locality steadily declined.

The WhatsApp group is set up on a stand-alone phone with no Police Systems on, so there are no security risks. It's a way the rural community can share information between themselves which sometimes needs no Police involvement.

#DurhamDifference: Due to the Guardian newspaper printing an article we have been approached by other forces (Cheshire and Northamptonshire - as they are interested in the work we do and the successes we are having). See Figure 7, Appendix A.

Research has been carried out by Northumbria University on behalf of Northumbria Police and it identified the work we do in the Durham Dales as the best practice.

Our model has been cascaded throughout our Force via Rural SPOCs who have the task of setting up Rural Watch volunteers and a WhatsApp group for their area.

The future –

Whilst there has been mutual gain with the success of the Rural Watch/WhatsApp groups, work continues to increase and expand the project.

- Partnership funding applications are in place for the renewal and expansion of the existing ANPR camera system, with emphasis on locations within the rural areas.
- We are currently working with a repeat victim of crime, who lives in a remote area. They will be receiving a police owned quad bike and tracker on a temporary basis, which they will be able to use on their farm. In addition to crime prevention measures, this will provide a pro-active opportunity to identify/locate offenders, should a future offence occur.
- In partnership with the community safety department, a number of Police Community Support Officers have been trained as rural SPOC's. They are able to conduct site security surveys, thus providing members of the community with advice and where appropriate, security equipment (Safer Homes project). This assists with both target hardening measures and improving community confidence.
- Reviews are regularly conducted on the existing trackers. This allows for them to be redeployed where appropriate, to maximise their efficiency.
- Ongoing financial applications are being made, with a view to purchasing a further 10+ trackers. This will allow a wider net of trackers to be present across the area and increase opportunities for prosecutions, if/where offences occur.

- Rural Watch continues to be promoted and expanded with additional members joining all the time.
- Partnership workings continue with the likes of the National Farmers Union, who in addition to the discount scheme mentioned earlier, also now to provide/install a free tracker device on any replacement quad which they provide.
- Operation Checkpoint deployments (both as part of either National/Regional or local operations) continue with an increase in volunteers from the community using WhatsApp and Zello digital platforms.

Appendix A

Figure 1

Headline from BBC News article regarding rural crime.

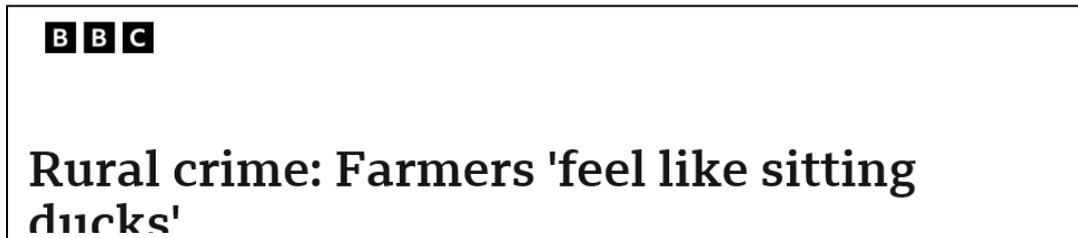


Figure 2

Quad thefts in Durham Constabulary (01-Jan-20 to 17-May-20). Crook area circled in red.

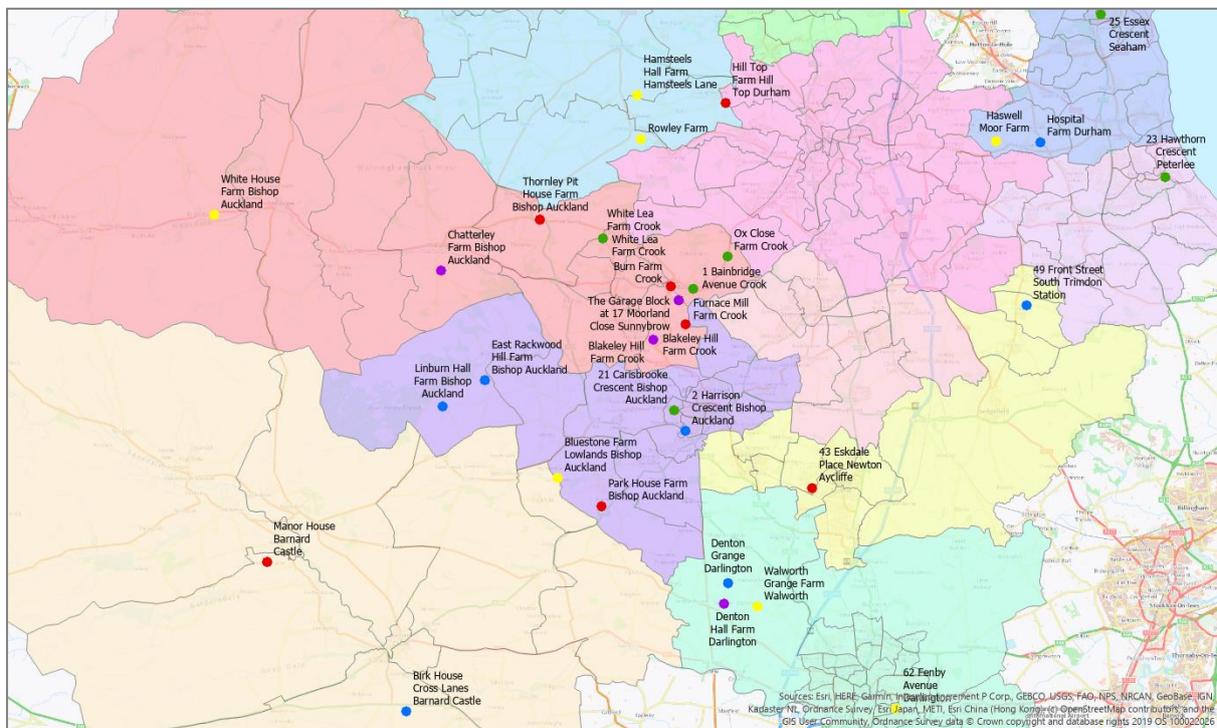


Figure 3

Crook quad crimes circled in red.

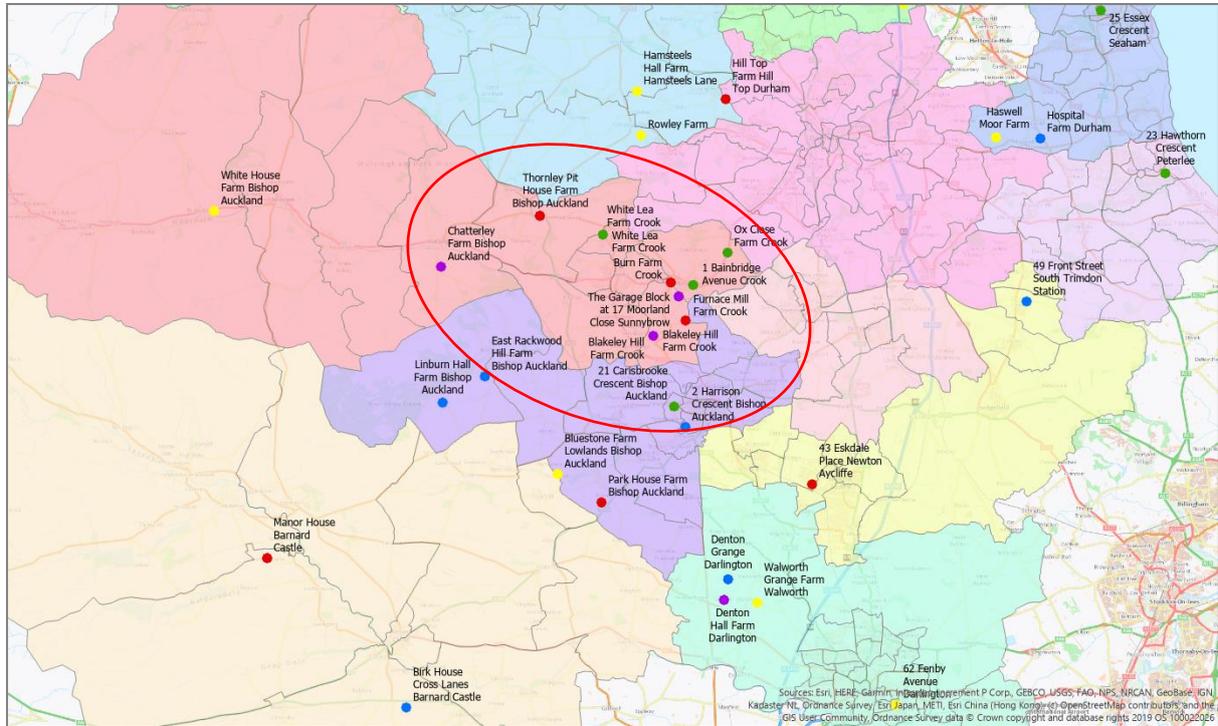


Figure 4

Time weighted analysis of 22 crimes within South locality.

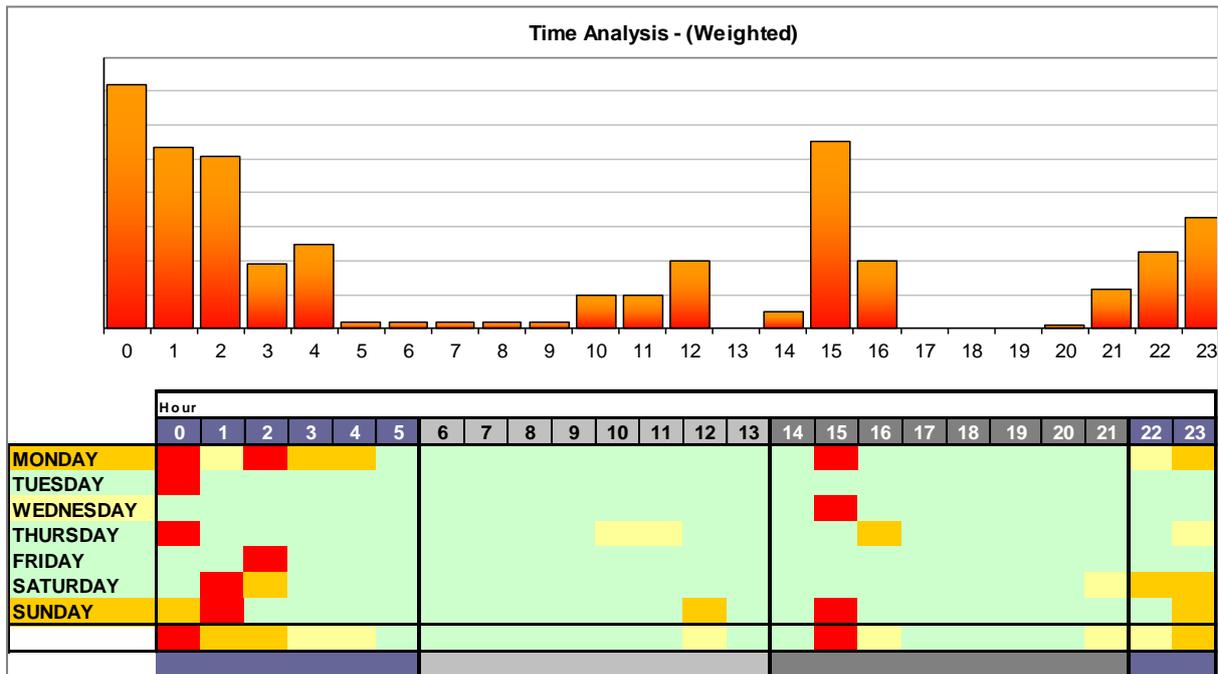


Figure 5

Time weighted analysis of 12 Crook crimes showing Saturday as also a probable day.

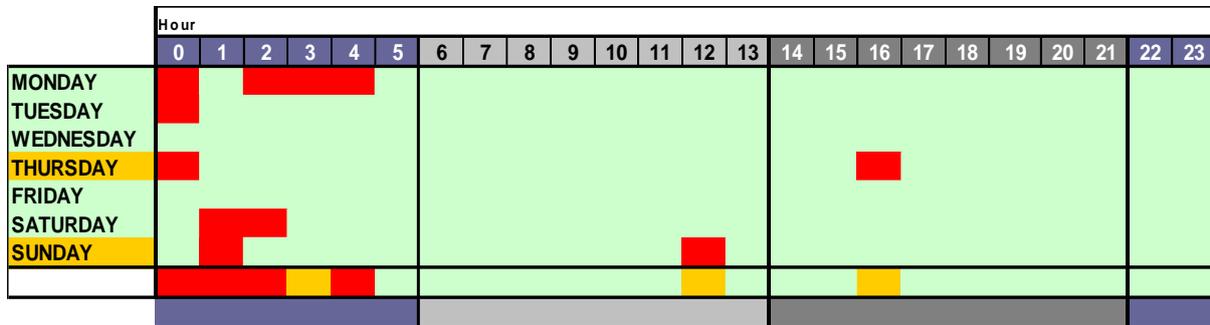


Figure 6

Problem Analysis Triangle – Victim, Offender, Location.

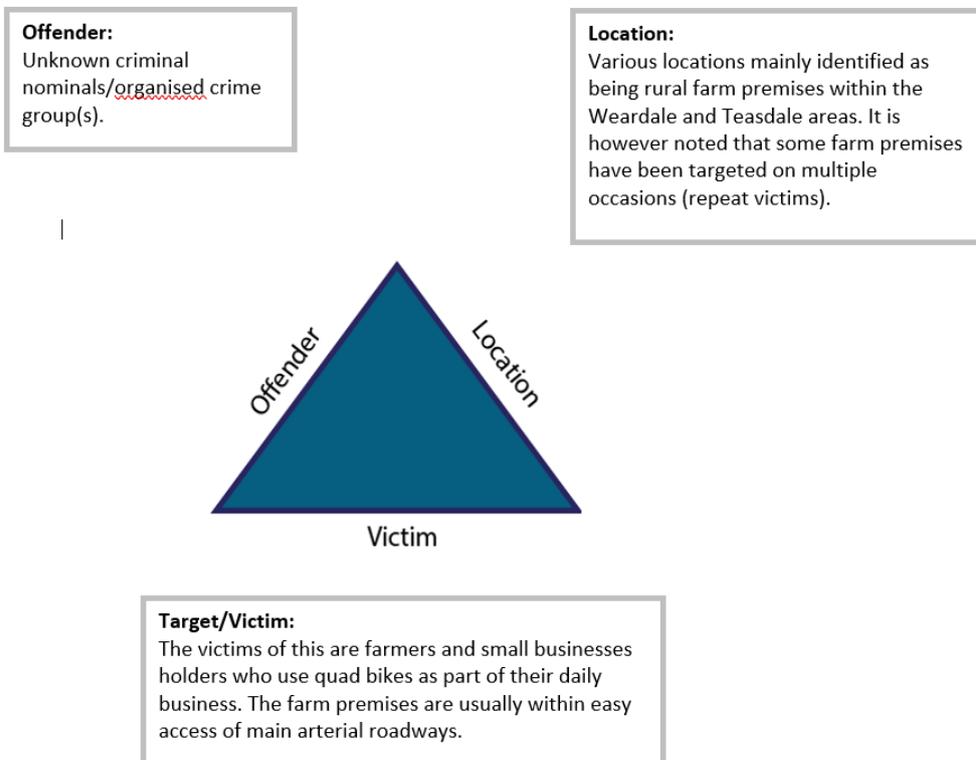


Figure 7

News articles regarding success of OP Lyric.

The image shows a screenshot of two news articles. The top article is from 'The Northern Echo' with the headline 'Durham police crime-fighting success thanks to Ruralwatch' and a date of '18th October 2021'. The bottom article is from 'ITV NEWS' with the headline 'Durham, Northumbria and Cleveland Police join together to crackdown on rural crime' and a timestamp of 'Saturday 9 April 2022, 3:55pm'. The articles are connected by a horizontal line with circular markers at the top and bottom.

The Northern Echo
Durham police crime-fighting success thanks to Ruralwatch
18th October 2021

Durham, Northumbria and Cleveland Police join together to crackdown on rural crime
Saturday 9 April 2022, 3:55pm **ITV NEWS**

Appendix B

Table 1

Quad related crimes between 01/01/2020 & 17/05/2020.

Theft of Quads	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Total
Burglary Business and Community	4	2	1	7	1	15
Burglary Residential	2	4	1	1	3	11
Interference with a motor vehicle			1			1
Theft if not classified elsewhere		1		1		2
Theft of a motor vehicle	2	4	3	1		10
Theft of conveyance other than motor vehicle or pedal cycle			1			1
Total	8	11	7	10	4	40

Table 2

Demonstrates that Crook was the highest level of quad crimes.

Theft of Quads	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Total
Darlington	2	1		1	1	5
East Durham	1	1	3	1		6
South Durham	2	6	4	7	3	22
Barnard Castle		1		1		2
Bishop Auckland	1	3	1	1		6
Crook	1	1	3	4	3	12
Newton Aycliffe		1		1		2
West Durham	3	3		1		7
Total	8	11	7	10	4	40

Table 3

Breakdown of quad crimes across South Durham

Theft of Quads - South Beats	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Total
Barnard Castle		1		1		2
C5 - Bowes		1				1
C2 - Cotherstone / The Dales				1		1
Bishop Auckland	1	3	1	1		6
A2D - Hamsterley Forest		2				2
A2C - Evenwood / Ramshaw	1			1		2
A1A - Woodhouse Close Estate		1				1
A1E - Greenfields / Etherley Dene			1			1
Crook	1	1	3	4	3	12
B1C - Sunnybrow / Hunwick				2	2	4
B1D - Willington / Oakenshaw			2	1		3
B1E - Billy Row / Stanley / Roddymoor		1	1			2
B2B - Tow Law / Sunnyside				1		1
B2F - Upper Weardale	1					1
B2C - Wolsingham					1	1
Newton Aycliffe		1		1		2
K2C - Trimdon Village		1				1
K1F - Greenfield Middridge Ward				1		1
Total	2	6	4	7	3	22

Table 4

Graph reflecting declining trend in quad thefts following implementation of Op Lyric.

