Organised crime and its impact in rural communities

Background

For some time, the National Rural Crime Network (the Network) has been concerned about the individual and cumulative impact of serious, organised and travelling criminality in rural communities. This concern was echoed by former DCC Craig Naylor, the previous NPCC lead for Rural Crime.

We also know from the Network’s 2018 survey ‘Living on the Edge’ that the public believe it is a significant problem. This study showed that on balance, the perception is that most perpetrators are part of an organised group. This was particularly the case for rural business owners who felt specifically targeted and victimised and the more geographically remote the victim, the higher these feelings.

The survey also demonstrated lower levels of confidence in policing, higher fear of crime and less community engagement, which contributed to increased non-reporting of crime – up a third by rural dwellers since 2015, and by two thirds for businesses. There was also a much higher percentage of rural people who felt the police were not dealing with their concerns when compared to urban communities, often citing failures to adequately address rural organised crime.

The data from the survey, operational examples and anecdotal evidence from forces and victims has therefore led the Network to conclude that the organised element of rural crime is not recorded or understood in the round, that vulnerability to exploitation is not contextualised and there is an intelligence ‘black hole’, which organised and travelling criminals are exploiting.

Policing approaches serious and organised crime in a tiered way:

1. **Local** – Specialist units in local forces pick up and address ‘serious and organised crime’, most often via organised crime units, covering groups and offences which most obviously comply with the Home Office definition e.g. drug production and supply, firearms, human trafficking etc, but which do not meet the criteria for regional action

2. **Regional** – More complex serious and organised crime groups and issues are classified and dealt with by the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU), whose work focuses on OCGs causing most significant harm

3. **National** – The most serious cases and highest risk OCGs – often with significant international characteristics - are managed by the National Crime Agency, with the support of ROCUs and local forces.
However, the crimes most prevalent in rural communities often do not meet the threshold of any of these policing teams, often due to the specific definition of ‘serious and organised crime’, referred to in the most recent Government strategy as:

“...individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks. The main categories of serious offences covered by the term are: child sexual exploitation and abuse; illegal drugs; illegal firearms; fraud; money laundering and other economic crime; bribery and corruption; organised immigration crime; modern slavery and human trafficking; and cyber-crime.”

In that 74-page strategy it is worth noting the word ‘rural’ features only twice, both in relation to DEFRA.

It is often ‘low level’ organised crime e.g. serious acquisitive crime, fraud/scams, hare coursing/poaching, waste crime etc. which impact greatly on rural communities and businesses, but are generally ‘missed’ by local organised crime teams, ROCUs and the NCA in any coordinated way because they are not considered serious and so are not analysed for trends, with very local teams responding in a very local way. Consequently, the entirety of the offending combined with the particular vulnerabilities of rural communities and the consequences are unknown.

It is the Network’s belief however that these crimes are almost always targeted and planned, deliberately exploiting rural vulnerabilities and therefore organised. Intelligence also suggests that they are often perpetrated by criminals involved in a wider range of crime, often more serious crime which does meet the Home Office definition, or working with other crime groups who undertake that crime. There is also anecdotal evidence that certain types of organised crimes are largely co-ordinated online e.g. poaching, hare coursing etc which also appears to be an untapped intelligence resource.

These factors are missed when not dealt with cohesively or consistently. Instead, rural crimes are most often picked up by local response or neighbourhood teams, with the wider organised crime element missed, and no central function with which to record, analyse or understand the compound impact these crimes have or the groups committing them. The resources in these teams are also smaller, and the types of crimes committed in rural areas are generally harder to progress and resolve, with many being cross-border and / or perpetrated by travelling criminals. These persistent, targeted and damaging crimes have a hugely detrimental effect on individuals, businesses and communities, not only causing serious economic harm, but also to wellbeing and feelings of safety, increasing vulnerability.
None of this is well understood, nor addressed. This results in a number of problems:

- Information and intelligence is not gathered or shared which would allow the scale of organised rural crime, and its links to OCGS, to be better understood
- Organised criminals being able to undertake more crime over a longer period because their crimes are being picked up in silos, and not addressed comprehensively
- The proceeds of these crimes being used for further, more serious, criminality
- Communities see crimes going seemingly unpunished, resulting in a loss of confidence
- When offenders are caught, the sentences attached to crimes which dominate rural policing are minimal e.g. acquisitive crime, hare coursing, waste crime
- Policing not understanding the reality of crime and vulnerability of rural areas, failing to prioritise it as a result.

Research proposal

The NRCN proposes to commission a comprehensive review into serious and organised crime in rural areas, comprising a programme of research that will gather evidence and data to explore the above issues. Once the data is obtained, the objectives of the project are to:

- Identify the extent and scale of organised and cross-border / travelling offending in rural communities
- To understand the nature of these crimes – including those that fall under the current definition of ‘serious and organised’, but also those outside
- Understand the specific vulnerabilities of rural communities and the harm inflicted on them, including businesses and individuals
- Describe and demonstrate the police (and partner) response to it
- Understand the repeat nature of offending, victimisation and vulnerability
- Identify gaps in understanding
- Make recommendations as to improvements in this area of policing (including for partners)

Given the sensitivity of the information, information security / data requirements and vetting we are proposing a ‘hybrid’ approach to the resources required to oversee and manage the research, conduct the data review and analysis of police (and potentially partner) information, understanding the impact on victims (individuals, communities and businesses), and developing insight and recommendations.
We are therefore inviting quotations from potential research partners to take overall responsibility for the delivery of the project, helping us to refine the methodology, conduct the qualitative research and prepare and write the report and recommendations. As much of the data analysis will need to be done in-house, we are asking the partner to oversee the dedicated police analyst resource, who will undertake the quantitative analysis of police (and partner) data.

We will be working closely with the new NPCC lead for Rural Crime to help us shape the practicalities of this work and how we best move it forward with the required analytical resource.

For the purposes of this research, the definition of organised crime should be:

- Any group already scored and adopted by policing (which would already include the more ‘serious’ crimes such as firearms, human trafficking, drugs supply and county lines, child exploitation)
- The following crime types:
  - All types of acquisitive crime in rural areas (including attempted)
  - Fly-tipping and waste crime
  - Livestock crime
  - Hare coursing
  - Poaching
  - Doorstep scams (with Trading Standards involvement)
  - Heritage crime
  - Criminal damage / arson (often linked with travelling criminals)
  - Trespass (will cover poaching and coursing on some occasions)

The definition of ‘rural’ should be consistent with the Network’s 2015, 2018 surveys and the Domestic Abuse research, which is in line with that of the Crime Survey of England and Wales and the Office for National Statistics.

**Methodology**

We are proposing a methodology similar to the Network’s study into domestic abuse in rural areas, whereby a number of force areas in England and Wales have their data gathered and assessed, but in this instance, also working in close co-operation with ROCUs, particularly in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber regions.

Bidders should allow for a minimum of six individual participating forces, plus two ROCUs.
This work needs to include both an assessment of police (including ROCUs) and available partner data, understanding and response, as well as the impact of these crimes on the community. The Network feels it is important to include rural forces who may already have the best understanding of these issues as they will most likely also gather appropriate data.

**Phases of work**

**Phase 1: Landscape review and gap analysis**

Review and understand existing national, regional and local problem profiles, intelligence analysis and practice in policing and partners e.g. individual forces, College of Policing, Home Office, ROCUs, National Trading Standards, Environment Agency. Identify key gaps in understanding to define scope of Phase 2. The output of this phase will be a report identifying the parameters for Phase 2 and its outputs, sufficient to brief and work with dedicated police analysts, local police forces, ROCUs and other partners. It will deliver:

- A landscape review of organised crime in rural areas – what is the current level of understanding? Is the Network hypothesis correct that rural organised crime is not fully understood or responses coordinated?
- A clear and developed proposal as to how organised crime in rural areas can best be assessed and understood
- In depth proposals as to how relevant data will be gathered and insight drawn
- Validation of the methodology and mitigation of methodological parameters being based on any specific procedure within any one force

**Phase 2: Data analysis, case studies and trends**

The research partner will need to work with the NPCC lead and police analysts to direct data and intelligence analysis. Aside from a suitable geographic spread and using the agreed definition of ‘rural’, the Network has no set idea about the methodology, and will be guided by the findings from Phase 1. The Network is open to the methodology reflecting the approach to a national problem profile / MORILE process.
Police analysts will principally gather and assess the data according to the specification as set out in Phase 1. However, this phase of work will also require in-depth discussions with local teams involved in managing rural organised crime so as decision making, local understanding and constraints are understood.

The research partner should allow for dip sampling in a minimum of six police force areas, to better understand the quality of policing response, including calls for service, quality, length and resources attached to any investigation where there was one, understanding police perspective on harm and vulnerability. The approach in rural areas should be compared to other areas including the understanding of the ‘seriousness’ with which it is considered and how it is prioritised.

There also needs to be assessment against offenders and their risk profile. For example, how many were part of (or have links to) a mapped and scored OCG; how much crime is cross border / travelling; any trends relating to offending and policing understanding of these offenders compared to others; the service provided to victims / repeat victims.

Phase 3: Victim interviews / focus groups

It is proposed that the research partner undertakes qualitative research into the impact on victims and communities. This can overlap with Phase 3, given it will largely be policing resources undertaking phase 2, allowing the research partner to lead phase 3. However, Phase 2 will inevitably impact how Phase 3 is best directed and so the work will need to be managed appropriately.

The Network expects Phase 3 to comprise focus groups / victim / partner interviews in each of the participating areas, but the research partner is welcome to suggest their own proposals.

As part of this work, there is the potential for individual PCCs to commission the research partner to conduct victim / community impact research in their own areas, using a common methodology, producing a local report. The cost of this additional work will be met by local PCCs and not by the Network in the context of this ITQ.
Phase 4: Report and recommendations

The research partner will be responsible for the development of a comprehensive report setting out the scale, understanding and response to organised crime in rural areas across England and Wales. This must include an assessment of police response, highlighting any good practice, and recommendations for improving the response to organised crime in rural areas both locally and nationally (where applicable). This must be compared to the impact organised crime has on rural communities, how well the police understand that impact and the ways in which that impact can be mitigated. The report should set out clear findings and recommendations, with a clear evidence trail between those and the data gathered and analysed.

**Timescale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scoping and tendering</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>25 October 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1: Landscape review</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>29 November 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 2: Data analysis</td>
<td>9 weeks (semi-concurrent)</td>
<td>31 January 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 3: Victim interviews</td>
<td>10 weeks (semi-concurrent)</td>
<td>28 February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 4: Report</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Final report 31 Mar 2020</td>
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**Budget**

The Network is looking for proposals of up to £40,000 +VAT to complete this research.

The budget must cover all costs of the external partner including staffing, research, report writing, planning, meetings, travel, mailings, stationery and other materials and resources as required.

The Network will cover any cost of necessary police analyst resources; the £40,000 is therefore for the costs of the external research partner only.

Quotations should be based on working with analysts in two ROCUs (Yorkshire and the Humber and the North West) and qualitative research in six individual police force areas, to be determined but allow for a geographical spread (excluding Scotland).

Please note that whilst an upper limit has been set, value for money is taken into account in the assessment of quotes and potential suppliers will need to clearly demonstrate this in their responses.
Selection Process

The closing date for proposals is 5pm Friday 25th October 2019. Proposals will be considered and the contract will be awarded by week commencing 28th October.

It may be discussions will be required to fully assess bids. If this is required, shortlisted bidders will be invited to a one-hour meeting on the morning of the Monday 28th October, so please prepare for that accordingly.

The successful partner will be expected to attend a face-to-face inception meeting to review and finalise the approach, timetable, roles, responsibilities and a communication plan, in the week commencing 28th October.

You will produce a comprehensive but concise document that demonstrates how you will be able to fulfil the requirements of the specification. Selection will be based on:

- Evidence of ability to deliver against the brief – 65%
- Value for money - 35%

Evidence of ability to deliver against the brief

In determining ability to deliver against the brief, proposals will be marked on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of ability to deliver against the brief</th>
<th>% Available</th>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed methodology – 15</td>
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<td>Case studies - 15</td>
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<td>Staff skills and experience - 15</td>
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<td>Schedule of work -10</td>
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<td>Quality Assurance - 10</td>
<td>65%</td>
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Value for money

Proposal price accounts for 35% of the total score. Costs MUST be presented inclusive AND exclusive of VAT. Proposals must be costed by activity and by team member using the costing table below.
To cover working with 6x police force areas and 2x ROCUs, producing a national report and recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Team Member 1 - Name</th>
<th>Team Member 2 - Name</th>
<th>...</th>
<th>No of days</th>
<th>Cost Ex VAT</th>
<th>Cost Inc VAT</th>
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<td>Phase 1</td>
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To expand the scope of the core project to additional police force areas:

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<th>Additional Elements – cost per additional police force area</th>
<th>Cost Excl VAT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Localised research (relevant activities in phases 2 and 3)</td>
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<td>Localised report (phase 4)</td>
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<th>Travel and Subsistence - Details</th>
<th>Cost Excl VAT</th>
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<td>Basic proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional activity per police force area</td>
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Questions:
Please direct any questions by email to will.naylor@northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk and we will do our best to respond within 48 hours.