



National Rural Crime Network

Office of the North Yorkshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
12 Granby Road | Harrogate | HG1 4ST

01423 569 562

info@nationalruralcrimenetwork.net

Jonathan Oxley
Interim Chief Executive
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

15 January 2020

Dear Mr Oxley

‘How to Steal Pigs and Influence People’ – Channel 4 – Tuesday, 14 January at 10pm

The National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) works to see greater recognition and understanding of the problems and impact of crime in rural areas so more can be done to keep people safe and make them feel safe too.

Established in July 2014, the Network is supported by 30 Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces across England and Wales. In addition to PCCs and the police, the Network is supported by a wide range of other bodies with a deep interest in community safety and rural affairs. Together, these members and supporters represent millions of people and as such the Network is uniquely placed to champion the needs of rural communities.

The objectives of the NRCN are to

1. Give rural communities a voice
2. Act as a multi-agency think tank on rural policing and criminal justice policy and practice, to ensure the needs of rural communities and victims are better served nationally and locally
3. Protect the rural economy by influencing and improving policy regarding rural policing and community safety, actively seeking to change legislation where necessary
4. Become a central hub for practitioners, encouraging national and regional outlets for discussions on rural crime issues between relevant rural partners, watch groups and appropriate national organisations, proactively sharing best practice
5. Increase reporting of rural crime and wider community safety issues.

Last night, Channel 4 broadcast 'How to Steal Pigs and Influence People' (14 January, 2200). Described as a documentary following a unique community of vegan and ex-vegan influencers, some of whom embark on farmyard heists, there has been understandable concern about the programme in rural communities.

The National Pig Association and the four UK farming unions, including the NFU – who are NRCN members – are among those who expressed their worries to Channel 4 ahead of broadcast that the programme glamorised and condoned crime and violence in rural areas. The broadcaster insisted 'the programme did not glamorise or condone illegal activity'.

We do not agree.

We believe the programme itself, and particularly the title and promotion ahead of broadcast, explicitly glamorises illegal activity and, therefore, we would be grateful if Ofcom would consider whether it has breached Rule 3.1 of the Broadcasting Code.

We understand that broadcasters often give titles to programmes which are intended to create debate, but we believe this goes beyond that.

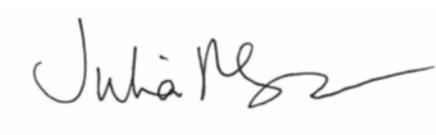
Our most recent National Rural Crime Survey found over two-thirds of farmers and rural-specific business owners have been a victim of crime over the past 12 months and nearly half (48 per cent) saying their quality of life is being moderately or greatly affected by crime.

Farmers are all too often living in fear of being targeted by crimes such as those seemingly normalised and glamorised by this programme. And farmers do not live on their farms on their own. Farms are home to families; they are at the heart of rural communities.

Rural crime is not a joke. Offences must not be trivialised. Victims do not deserve to be belittled.

Due to the public interest in this issue in rural communities, we will be releasing this letter and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Mulligan', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Julia Mulligan

Chair, National Rural Crime Network