

# Gold Strategy – Response Trail Hunting Season 2020



Gold – T/ACC Matt Welsted

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## Information

The Hunting act 2004 creates a number of offences relating to hunting with dogs.

Since the Hunting Act 2004 came into effect in 2005, a number of legal forms of hunting live quarry remain: these are listed in Schedule 1 of the Hunting Act 2004 (Exempt Hunting). In addition, it remains legal to hunt an artificial scent laid in advance by people, rather than a scent left naturally by a live animal such as a fox or hare; the form of scent hunting said to have been adopted by hunts since the Hunting Act 2004 is called 'trail hunting'. Trail hunting is a recently-invented activity which involves someone laying an animal scent trail for dogs to follow. In principle, trail hunting is superficially similar to drag hunting, a legal activity which long pre-dated the Hunting Act 2004. Trail hunting and drag hunting are very different activities.

There are four main hunts operating across the county:

- Cheshire Forest Hunt.
- Cheshire Hounds Hunt.
- Wynnstay Hunt.
- Cheshire Beagles

The hunting season in Cheshire begins October/November 2020 and ends at the beginning of March 2021. Hunting activity takes place most weekends and on some days during the week. There is also a pre-season hunting related activity which begins at the end of August, running into the start of the hunting season. There have been regular protests during the hunting season and more recently during the exercising of the hounds.

## Overall aim

To work in partnership to keep our communities even safer whilst balancing the rights of people participating in trail hunts, monitoring or protesting against illegal hunting or communities going about their normal business.

## Objectives

**Maintain public safety**, so far as is reasonably possible, for those involved in trail hunting, protesting or impacted by it, taking account of the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2 – The Right to Life) and within this take all reasonable measures to safeguard officers and police staff under the terms of health and safety legislation.

**Facilitate legal hunting activities, monitoring and peaceful protests**. Provide a lawful and proportionate response to any reports, balancing the needs and rights of those involved with those impacted by the activity.

**Prevent and deter crime and disorder**. So far as is reasonably possible at any location affected by hunting related activity and in the surrounding communities, using visible neighbourhood policing. Criminal justice processes will be used in a proportionate way. All reports of criminal offences

including those relating to the hunting act 2004 will be recorded and proportionately investigated in accordance with our crime investigation standards.

**Minimise disruption**, so far as is reasonably possible, to the local residents, businesses and users of the local transport network by working with partners to ensure that effective traffic management is in place.

**Maintain business as usual** in the local area and across Cheshire by careful planning and the proportionate use of police resources.

**Engagement**. Cheshire Police will facilitate effective engagement with key stakeholders to promote transparency and mutual understanding of the police response.

**Maintain public confidence** through continued dialogue and pro-active communication, ensuring that people involved in hunting related activity, landowners, partners, protestors and those likely to be impacted by events are, where appropriate, informed, advised and reassured by an effective communication plan, using a variety of communications media. This will specifically include the outcome of any investigation relating to the Hunting Act 2004.

**Return to Normality**. Should disruption occur, at the earliest opportunity, when considered safe and appropriate to do so, 'return to normality', in order that the local community and transport network can resume with minimal disruption and return to 'business as usual'.

**Identify and implement learning**. Ensure that any 'good practice' or 'areas for improvement' are captured and acted upon. Seek out expert advice and adopt a learning organisation style to the development of our staff and any future plans.

## **POLICING STYLE – The 'Look and Feel' of the policing approach.**

There are significant numbers of people who participate in exempt hunting activity as well as significant numbers of people who are opposed to the hunting of wild mammals with dogs.

The European convention of Human rights creates a positive duty on Police Officers to balance the rights of people with differing views requiring the facilitation of peaceful activities.

- **PROFESSIONAL**. Officers are expected to uphold the values of the Constabulary and Code of Ethics, specifically taking account of the diverse needs of those they encounter, ensuring that public safety is a paramount consideration at all times. When considered to be necessary, officers are expected to take effective action to achieve the objectives.
- **FRIENDLY** Officers have specific roles, but also have a duty to balance the rights and needs of individuals whether involved in trail hunting, protesting or trying to carry on with their normal lives and so should make every effort to engage positively, demonstrating a friendly and understanding manner.
- **FLEXIBLE** Officers are expected to remain vigilant and continually assess the unfolding situation around them, reporting appropriate updates and taking action where necessary to achieve the objectives.
- **FAIR** Officers should be fair in any decisions made, taking account of any victim, offender, and the local community. They must demonstrate (and be seen to demonstrate) impartiality and ensure that any action follows a '**No Surprises**' principle, is necessary, proportionate, legitimate, auditable and complies with the Code of Ethics.

## **Outcomes:**

### **Preferred outcomes for this operation:**

- Everyone involved in exempt hunting, trail hunting, drag hunting, protesting, monitoring or otherwise impacted in some way is kept safe
- No officers or police staff are injured
- Exempt hunting, trail hunting, drag hunting and monitoring activity is facilitated.
- Any person wishing to conduct a peaceful protest is facilitated using negotiation
- Minimal disruption to businesses and the local community
- No crime or disorder occurs
- The policing operation enhances public confidence in Cheshire Constabulary.
- Policing involvement is minimised

### **Acceptable Outcomes:**

- Harm to anyone involved in exempt hunting, trail hunting, drag hunting, monitoring, protesting or anyone otherwise impacted in some way is minimised and any identified potential risks are, as far as reasonably practical, mitigated against.
- Minor disruption or isolated and transient disruption occurs.
- Proportionate and lawful efforts are made to facilitate any peaceful protest including the use of relevant legislation
- Temporary disruption to businesses or the local transport network.
- Minor crime and isolated disorder
- All reports of criminal offences are recorded and proportionate investigations are completed in accordance with our crime investigation standards.

### **Unacceptable Outcomes:**

- Exempt hunting, trail hunting, drag hunting and monitoring activity is prevented
- Peaceful protests are prevented
- Significant, preventable disruption to businesses, the local community or the transport infrastructure
- Our approach fails to contain and reduce disorder as quickly as possible, using appropriate tactics and protective equipment, thus leading to large-scale violence.
- Our policing approach fails to prevent significant crime and we fail to instigate a proportionate police investigation that seeks to bring to justice those involved and prevent further offences.

## **Command Protocols**

There will be an accredited Silver Commander who will be responsible for developing their Tactical Plan. At a minimum there will be an identified Bronze Commander at least at the rank of sergeant for each pre-planned policing operation.

All media enquiries will be managed by Corporate Communications. However key messages and press releases will be directed and agreed through Gold, although Silver is authorised to respond to any dynamic need for communications.

## **Tactical Parameters**

Any request or requirement to change the policing style of this operation should be agreed with Gold, unless there is an urgent operational need in which case Silver is empowered to respond accordingly and notify Gold as soon as practicable

This includes the mode of dress of officers and the use of public order tactics – officers in protected equipment, dogs and horses.

**T/Assistant Chief Constable Matt Welsted**