

Rural policing strategy outlined at 175th anniversary meeting

A new rural policing strategy will seek to work even more closely with the agricultural and wider community, the 175th anniversary meeting of Stalham Farmers' Club was told on Wednesday, December 14..

The farming community has a positive role to play in helping the police, said Chief Insp Lou Provart, who heads the new strategy.

In west Norfolk, a new co-operative approach involving gamekeepers, farmers and landowners had also achieved results, he told about 60 club members. And efforts to prevent illegal hare coursing had been successful, particularly around the Downham Market area because of information provided to dedicated police officers, he added.

He expected that this model could easily be spread across the county to prevent other types of criminal behavior in the countryside.

He did stress that Norfolk was fortunate, partly because of its relative isolation, to be among the five counties with some of the lowest crime rates in England and Wales.

However, he did understand that crime, especially theft of valuable farm machinery costing an estimated £800,000 in Norfolk last year, remained a concern.

He was delighted to join the club's 175th anniversary celebrations – noting that Norfolk Constabulary had also been established in 1841.

Mr Provart, who was proud to be a Norfolk man, had joined the police 17 years ago after studying at the University of East Anglia.

Responsible for the community safety command, which also includes the rural policing brief, he recognised that closer links needs to be forged with the farming and landowning community. It was now a definite priority to work together and he said that this was a significant change of emphasis.

In replying to a number of questions, Mr Provart said that the police service was determined to work even more closely with farming groups and organisations. And one member of his team, Andy Brown, had already met many branch officials of the National Farmers' Union, to tackle specific issues.

He was thanked by the High Sheriff of Norfolk, Sir William Cubitt, who is also a club member. His family has been involved with the club and included two former presidents, who held the senior post for a total of 83 years.

To mark the anniversary, the club donated a total of £8,000 to four charities. Four senior members were invited to present the cheques, Ken Leggett, James Paterson, Nigel Wright and John Tallowin to the representatives of the East Anglian Air Ambulance, the YANA (You Are Not Alone) Project, the Big C Appeal and Thornage Hall.