



“Major Impact on Rural Crime”

Many of the thefts took place in parts of Cheshire Police Eastern Area including Tabley, High Legh, Ashley, Chelford and Allostock. Detective Sergeant Antony King, from Cheshire Police Eastern Area was a leading member of the team which investigated the agricultural thefts. He said:

"This was a very satisfying investigation which led to the dismantling of an organized crime group stealing hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of equipment and disrupting law abiding citizens' lives. My officers worked tirelessly to piece together the evidence to bring this group to justice and it was extremely pleasing to know, as the investigation progressed, that this group would have a case to answer at court. It is why I joined the police".

"We had information about these crimes and we put together a small team of detectives from Eastern and Western Areas of Cheshire Police. That was the key to the success of the inquiry.

"The team reviewed all the evidence in every case of agricultural machinery theft over the previous year or so. We went through everything and identified about thirty cases where further lines of inquiry were possible, or where there was something to indicate the identity of some suspects. We followed through on this and that led to a number of the men being arrested. That move opened up new lines of inquiry and we were able to take the cases further.

"One of the reasons we were successful and the reason that they pleaded guilty was the very thorough and careful preparation of the evidence.

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“We believe some of this equipment has probably been sold abroad and is now in use a long way away from Cheshire.

“We appreciate the problems which the theft of agricultural machinery poses for the farming community and this successful investigation marks a major step forward. Putting these offenders behind bars will have a major impact on rural crime.

“The Rural Watch system which is now expanding will help to keep crime down and we would ask farmers to make sure their equipment, which is very valuable, is kept secure.

For information on Home Watch and Rural Watch in East Cheshire contact Jane Thirsk on 01244 612725