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Sent: 14 January 2021 14:38

Subject: Policing COVID regulations

Dear All

This morning I had a useful conversation with Chief Superintendent Barnett, Divisional Commander for Derbyshire in Derbyshire police, mainly about policing Covid restrictions. Some local residents have felt that there needs to be more enforcement of the rules. This not simple since the rules are unclear.

The Chief Superintendent talked mainly about the difficulty of policing Covid regulations in this current lockdown, particularly those around exercise. "Exercise" is not defined as it was in the lockdown last year, when people were only allowed to go walking, running or cycling. The guidance says "stay close to home" but this is also not defined. Someone from the other side of Greater Manchester, for example, could come to the Hope Valley for exercise without clearly breaching any guidance. Guidance is anyway not binding. The criterion is "reasonableness", but obviously this is open to interpretation. People are not breaking the law by exercising here, so all the police can do in this situation is talk to people.

The National Police Chiefs Council is putting pressure on the government to clarify these points so that police can act consistently - and so that the public are clearer about what they can do.

Several incidents involving Derbyshire police have attracted the attention of national media. This seems to have been positive in the end as it means that the government is forced to do something about the problems the police have.

On another subject: Chief Superintendent Barnett asked me how far rural crime police are engaging with the community - this includes wildlife crime. She advised that people should report all incidents which might involve rural and wildlife crime even if they think the police cannot do anything. The incidents then get on police systems and they can argue for more resources if necessary. Currently there are only 8 rural crime officers in The whole of Derbyshire. See also <https://www.derbyshire.police.uk/wildlifecrime>

I hope this is useful

Best wishes

Joanna

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