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TIM SWINER

about two-thirds of Britain's wind turbines.

All this said, I don't believe that farmers and growers are just the hapless victims of climate change. I am certain that we can also offer solutions – if we are allowed to invest in our adaptive capacity, and if we use our natural resources to their full potential.

Meurig Raymond
NFU president

buzzards and crows are causing me to miss the bird targets set out in my Higher Level Stewardship plan by eating skylarks, lapwings and grey partridges.

Although I can't condone the killing of buzzards by the Study Estate (News, 27 November), I do have sympathy with their problem. The penalty imposed by RPA of £184,538 is completely out of proportion to any damage done to the wildlife.

The RSPB has killed protected predators in the past, so why is it OK for them to do this, when other people can't?

Michael Jackson
Laxton, Nottinghamshire

Talking Point

Frank Cannon Security specialist



Everyone must be a crimefighter

“Complacency” is an eleven-letter word that scores 24 points in Scrabble. It could also be your worst enemy in the fight against rural crime. A complacent person believes that simple crime reduction measures are for other people and equipment theft is something they read about in *Farmers Weekly* between November and March when the dark nights are long and there may be fewer people around on the farm.

But a series of simple, common-sense actions can reduce the opportunity for a thief to succeed and of you becoming a victim of rural crime.

It is not uncommon to discover a £50,000 tractor left unattended overnight in an unsecured yard or barn. However, removing the keys from the ignition, activating the engine immobiliser, locking the cab, closing and securing barn doors and closing and locking the yard gates would make a thief's chances of stealing it that much harder.

Will these simple security measures guarantee absolute protection? No, of course not, but they may deter the opportunist or cautious thief.

A commercial security adviser might encourage you to spend thousands of pounds on strong fencing, robust gates, intruder detection and closed-circuit television, and there are instances when this does make sense. I would argue, however, that through the creation of a “security culture” in your own mind and across your employees, and by adopting simple but effective countermeasures, you can deter, detect or delay a criminal long enough to initiate a suitable response.

The security industry often talks of the “Theft Triangle” consisting of motive, desire and opportunity. When all are present, the likelihood of a theft is at its highest. You can seldom affect the motive or desire of a criminal, but you can reduce the opportunities for a thief. Remove the opportunity and theft cannot occur. When assessing the probability of successfully removing your property, a thief must believe that the chances of getting caught are small or that the rewards of success outweigh the consequences of failure.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that much rural theft – especially of large agricultural machinery – involves items stolen to order and occurs only after prior reconnaissance or advanced surveillance. This means that the thief will have previously visited your farm or watched how and where you park your kit overnight. The thief will have the initiative and can choose when to act.

So is it down to luck? No, it's about doing

the simple things habitually. It's about creating a culture where everyone on the farm accepts responsibility for protecting vehicles, equipment and tools. It's about thinking like a thief and identifying the vulnerabilities. Ask yourself: “If I wanted to steal something from the farm, what would it be? How would I do it? What obstacles might prevent me from being successful?”

It is about denying the opportunity for a thief to get to – or remove – vehicles or pieces of equipment. If they need a vehicle to tow, lift or carry an item away, then focus on preventing them from getting close enough to the property they want to steal. Set out your yard to create natural or engineered barriers; put heavy items of equipment or large tree trunks to deny a route of approach, dig ditches or create earth banks impassable by trucks or trailers, adapt and position obsolete property to block open areas or simply lock commercially engineered gates with high-quality shielded padlocks.

The more accessible your yard is to the public, the greater the chances of it being targeted.

Consider where you park or store your most critical assets and always create a natural boundary between what is public space and your private property. Maximise the use of warning signage and learn how to recognise suspicious behaviour – and who to report it to.

Make your property unique by overtly marking it so it becomes easily recognisable; consider stamping your postcode or a farm logo in places where it is obvious. Back this up with covert marking on numerous component parts. Create an asset register to list all manufacturers' serial numbers and record digital photographs of your most valuable or critical items of equipment.

Plan what to do if you see something suspicious or believe your property is subject to a criminal attack. Never place yourself in harm's way and always collect as much information as possible to assist the police; learn how to use your smartphone camera – it could help you collect evidence that leads to the recovery of your property.

Farmers are busy with many pressing tasks, but it is important to never let complacency creep in.

* Frank Cannon is a security specialist with more than 30 years' experience in safeguarding people and property across the globe

* Do you have a view you would like to be considered for the **Talking Point** slot? Email tim.rell@rbi.co.uk