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All-Wales Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme – Theory of Change Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

| Acronym/Key word | Definition |
|-------------------------|---|
| Activities | Actions taken or processes carried out in the Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordination Programme, using inputs to produce an output. These include planning, designing, building, and delivering a product or service. |
| CPS | Crown Prosecution Service |
| CJS | Criminal Justice System |
| Impact | Broader and longer-term changes or benefits that result from achieving the outcomes of the WRC Coordination Programme. This can include improvements in well-being and reduction in crime. |
| Inputs | Resources used by the WRC Coordination Programme to carry out an activity or produce an output. These can include money, equipment, data, materials, and human resources. |
| ISA | Information Sharing Agreement |
| LoRaWAN | Long Range Wide Area Networks |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NPCC | National Police Chiefs' Council |
| NRCU | National Rural Crime Unit |
| NRW | Natural Resources Wales |
| NWCU | National Wildlife Crime Unit |
| Outcomes | Broader effects resulting from the outputs produced by the WRC Coordination Programme activities. They can include changes in behaviour, attitudes, or knowledge, and advancements in the wildlife and rural crime field. |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Outputs | Tangible or measurable results of an activity carried out by the WRC Coordination Programme. These can include products, services, reports, and other deliverables. |
| PDG | Priority Development Group [UK] or Priority Delivery Group [Wales] |
| PG | Priority Group |
| PND | Police National Database |
| PWCO | Police Wildlife Crime Officer, term used interchangeably with WCO |
| Rural crime | Criminal activities that occur in the countryside, as opposed to metropolitan areas. There are many ways to define 'rural', this report adopts the National Statistics classification of settlement type and context (Welsh Government, 2008 – see Annex A). Rural crime refers to offences that take place in rural contexts (Ceccato and Abraham 2022). These may be routine crimes (e.g., drug dealing or county lines, domestic abuse or burglary) or crimes specific to the rural context (e.g., farm, agricultural, equine, heritage or environmental crime). |
| Stakeholders | A stakeholder is a party that has an interest in the outcomes of the WRC Coordination Programme, they can either affect or be affected by the Programme (e.g., communities, interest groups). For the purpose of this report, this also includes key partners, such as enforcement, who deliver the Programme. |
| ToC | Theory of Change. A framework that maps the expected inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the WRC Coordination Programme including through the Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordinator role, alongside the main assumptions that underpin them, and indicators to support the monitoring progress of the role. |
| ToC LM | Theory of Change Logic Model. |

Visual representation of the steps and relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact described in the ToC.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| Wales WRC Strategy | Wales Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy. Strategy designed to address wildlife and rural crime in Wales. The strategy outlines the priorities, goals and approaches for tackling wildlife and rural crime and promoting conservation efforts in rural areas in Wales. |
| WCO | Wildlife Crime Officer within the police, term can be used interchangeably with PWCO |
| WG | Welsh Government |
| Wildlife crime | Criminal activities that involve the illegal trade, killing, or exploitation of protected or endangered species of animals or plants, or their parts or products. This includes poaching, coursing, hunting, poisoning, trafficking of wildlife, illegal trade in animal products, and destruction of habitats. |
| WRC | Wildlife and Rural Crime. Criminal activities that occur in rural contexts, which includes any activity which contravenes the legislation which protects rural communities and wildlife and their habitats. It encompasses a wide range of common offences (e.g., domestic violence, theft) and those more unique to rural areas (e.g., wildlife crime, equine crime, livestock worrying, fly-tipping). |
| WRC Coordinator | [All-Wales] Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordinator. Role funded by the Welsh Government that aims to develop the Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordination Programme in Wales. |
| WRC Coordination Programme | Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme. A programme of work established by the Welsh Government which involves a partnership initiative between North Wales |

Police, Dyfed-Powys Police, Gwent Police, South Wales Police, the Welsh Government, and other Welsh stakeholders. The programme is designed to tackle wildlife and rural crime in Wales by improving coordination, communication, and information-sharing between law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders. The Wales WRC Strategy will be used to execute the Programme aims.

WRC Officer

Wildlife and Rural Crime Officer.

Also known as Wildlife Crime Officer or Rural Crime Officer.

Specialised law enforcement officer responsible for investigating, preventing, and raising awareness of wildlife-related offences and crimes occurring in rural areas.

WRC Team

Wildlife and Rural Crime Team.

Specialised units within law enforcement agencies that focus on addressing and combating wildlife and rural crimes. These teams are dedicated to investigating offences related to wildlife, natural resources, and occurring in rural areas.

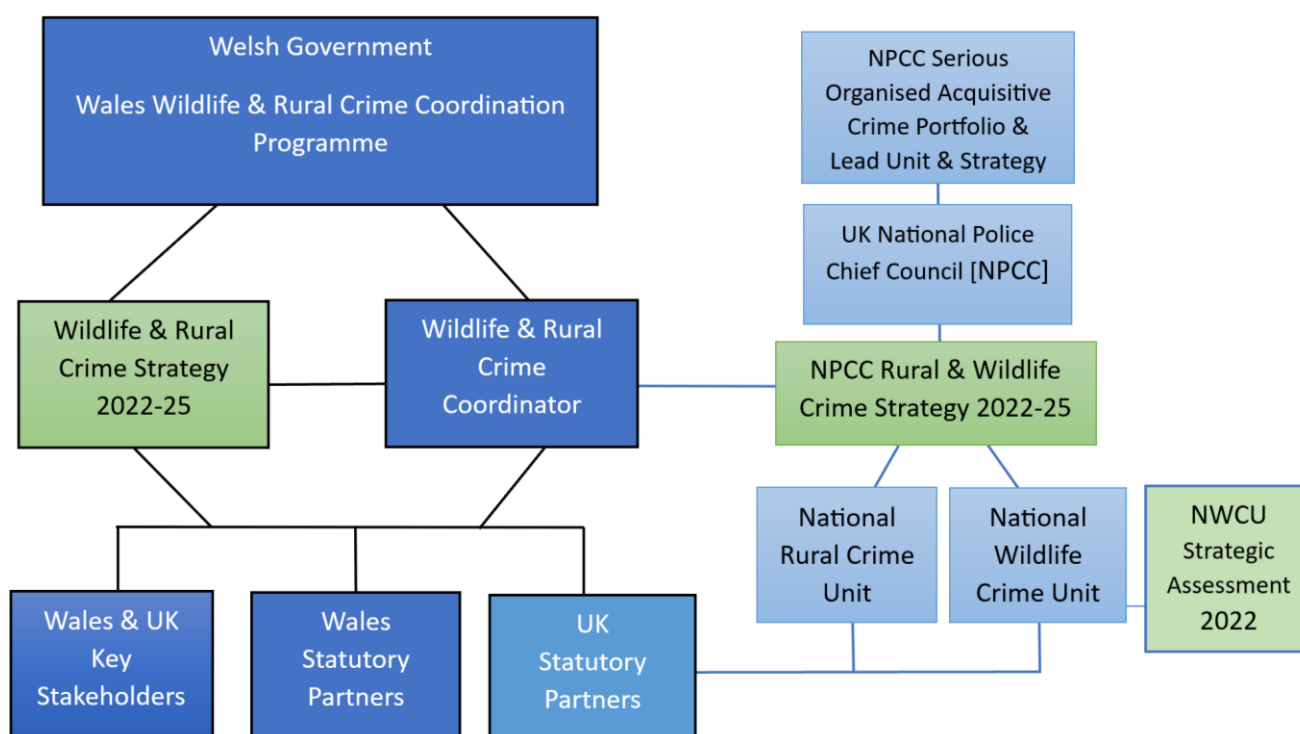
1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In 2021 the Welsh Government (WG, 2023), created the Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordinator role, the first of its kind in the UK. Due to the positive impact directly attributed to the role during a 12-month trial Ministers recently extended funding for the role until 2025. This is part of the WG's investment in resources to tackle Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) and to enhance multi-agency partnerships. For example, the training and allocation of specific officers within enforcement agencies in Wales, such as Wildlife and Rural Crime Officers (WRC Officer) and Wildlife and Rural Crime Teams (WRC Team).
- 1.2 In 2023, the WG published the 'Wales' Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy 2023-2025' (henceforth Wales WRC Strategy/Strategy), which aims to establish a comprehensive and efficient response to WRC throughout Wales. The focus of this Strategy is to further develop an all-Wales coordinated and effective response to WRC, which is tailored to Wales' needs. It aims to support policing and its partners to prevent crime, pursue those who commit it, and protect those most affected by it. The communities, individuals, habitats, animals, and wildlife most at risk of harm are central to this Strategy.
- 1.3 This Strategy brings together the efforts of enforcement partners and various stakeholders to address the issues that have the greatest impact on rural communities and animals. The WRC Coordinator initially identified the priorities in Wales, which were subsequently validated through consultations with the four policing areas, WG, and other key stakeholders (WG, 2023). Aligned with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy 2022-2025 (2022), the Wales Strategy outlines strategic objectives to be pursued. These include:
- fostering partnerships,
 - enhancing enforcement training and strategic development opportunities,
 - improving intelligence and information sharing,
 - utilising technology,
 - collaborating with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to enhance legislation and crime reporting,

- increasing prevention efforts through communication, awareness, and education.

1.4 The Coordinator role is part of the Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme (WRC Coordination Programme), which is structured to enhance collaboration and responses to WRC among partners and stakeholders across Wales. Figure 1 provides an overview of this structure. Statutory partners, such as the police, are central to the Programme, which aims to support individual police area strategies, enhance WRC Officer and WRC Team capacity and capabilities, and maximise best practice. Furthermore, the Programme seeks to develop effective partnerships between statutory partners and stakeholders to support the Strategy aims. Stakeholders include NGOs, interest groups and the public. The Programme, while addressing the specific challenges and needs in Wales, also essentially links to broader UK wildlife and rural crime agencies and strategies, which work towards similar priorities. Strategies are highlighted in Figure 1 in green.

Figure 1: Overview of the Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordination Programme



1.5 The Programme contributes to the broader aims of the Welsh Government and their ambitious legislative programme which helps protect rural communities, animals, and biodiversity. It aligns, for example, with the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) for cohesive Welsh communities where people feel safe and a resilient Wales that enhances a biodiverse natural environment adaptable to change. The WRC Coordination Programme supports the Programme for Government (WG, 2021) aims: to make cities, towns, and villages even better places to live and work; and to embed the response to climate and nature emergency in everything the WG does. Likewise, by responding to wildlife, farm, and environmental crimes, it removes barriers to sustainable natural resources and delivering better outcomes for people and communities, as set out in The Environment (Wales) Act (2016). The WRC Coordination Programme supports other pieces of legislation that aim to specifically or generally address rural community and animal well-being, for example:

- Planning Act (Wales) 2015
- Programme for Government 2021
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017
- The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Pests Act 1954 & The Spring Traps Approval (Variation) (Wales) Order 2021
- Agriculture (Wales) Bill 2022
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Hunting Act 2004
- Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953
- Food and Environment Protection Act 1985
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996
- Theft Act 1968
- Theft Act 1978

Research Aims and Objectives

1.6 This research initially broadly aimed to develop a Theory of Change (henceforth identified as ToC) that mapped the expected inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the WRC Coordinator role. However, to acknowledge the overarching aim to

deliver a programme of work through this role, the study has expanded to look at the WRC Coordination Programme as a whole rather than the role holder specifically. Furthermore, this captures the Programme's dependency on the voluntary contribution of partners and stakeholders to deliver its aims. Therefore, the research will here forth be referred to as developing a WRC Coordination Programme Theory of Change. This aim will be achieved through four research objectives:

- to draw on existing documentation relating to the WRC Coordination Programme to understand the context, assumptions and previous running and performance of the Programme,
- to determine the key inputs, activities, outputs, and expected outcomes of the WRC Coordination Programme to develop a draft ToC Logic Model (ToC LM),
- to consult with the key stakeholders responsible for delivering the WRC Coordination Programme to develop and discuss the draft ToC LM, identify underlying assumptions and metrics to monitor future performance,
- to develop a ToC LM and indicators to support monitoring the progress of the programme using the insights gained through data collection.

1.7 This section now introduces the problem of wildlife and rural crime and its enforcement in Wales. It considers research on rural crime and wildlife crime separately as well as WRC collectively – relevant background to clarify the rationale for, and purpose of the research in developing a ToC and associated ToC LM, which supports future WRC Coordination Programme development, monitoring, and evaluation.

Existing research on Wildlife and Rural Crime relevant to Wales

Impacts and costs of WRC

1.8 Wildlife and rural crimes negatively impact large areas of Wales (North Wales Police, 2023; NFU Mutual, 2022; United Nations, 2021). The offences that occur in rural contexts are diverse; they include conventional crimes (e.g., burglary, violent crimes) and crimes more unique to rural areas, such as agricultural, equine, environmental, heritage, and wildlife crime. While the volume of crime in rural areas is typically lower than in urban areas (Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, 2022), it is also less likely to be detected, reported, and correctly recorded (NPCC,

2018). Consequently, evidence indicates that the impact of rural crime is underestimated and presents unique challenges to those responding to it.

- 1.9 Contextually, the National Rural Crime Network survey¹ (2018) revealed 69 per cent of farmers and rural-specific businesses had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months. The Welsh Farm and Rural Crime survey (Norris and Morris, 2022) found over half of respondents (55 per cent) reported being a victim of crime². After a fall in rural crime in the UK (United Kingdom) during the Covid-19 pandemic, estimates on the cost of rural crime are returning to pre-pandemic levels. Based on reports by NFU Mutual (2023) alone³, rural crimes cost the UK and Wales, respectively, £49.5m and £2.3m in 2022. These figures correspond to a 22 per cent and 73 per cent increase on the previous year. Scotland, alone, experienced a decrease, with rural crime almost halving in 2022.
- 1.10 Similar data on the scale and cost of wildlife crimes in Wales is not available due to data limitations (see discussion on data limitations below). However, the Link (2021) report, which collates and reports non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) recorded wildlife crime incidents and prosecutions across England and Wales, identified similar patterns of increased wildlife offences following a decrease during the pandemic. The extensive impact of these offences on wildlife, the environment, and communities is difficult to monetise and measure. Conservation reports emphasise the impact of the continued decline in UK wildlife and biodiversity, which has resulted in the UK remaining one of the least biodiverse countries worldwide (United Nations, 2021). This resulted in the Senedd declaring a 'nature emergency' in 2021 (Noebels et al., 2021).

The role of police partnerships with rural communities and stakeholders

- 1.11 Prior research has established the impact of rural crime among rural communities, who reported high levels of fear of crime and low levels of trust and confidence in the police (National Rural Crime Network, 2018; NFU Cymru and NFU, 2017). Just over a quarter (27 per cent) of rural respondents in the National Rural Crime Network

¹ Data based on respondents from England, Wales and Northern Ireland only.

² The survey built upon the findings and research conducted in the Dyfed Powys area in 2020. Importantly it captured the perspectives of local farmers, enterprises, and rural residents and was coproduced with the rural police teams and the Coordinator.

³ These figures are based on NFU Mutual UK insurance claim statistics only, they do not include rural crimes which are not reportable to NFU Mutual, that are reported to other insurers, or those which go undetected or unreported.

(2018) report rated the police as good, compared to more than half (52 per cent) of the general population in the Crime Survey of England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Distrust in the police was reported as a key factor in rural crime going unreported, as respondents felt the police and CJS did not understand the issues or adequately respond to them. Despite the established link between wildlife and rural crimes and organised crime, many offences involve vulnerable animal victims and the environment, which may wrongly be perceived by enforcement agencies and communities as 'victimless' crimes (United Nations, 2021).

- 1.12 The above evidence indicates the importance of working closely with the community to build trust and understand local issues. According to the NPCC (2018), engagement with rural communities and partners is essential to enhancing the response and intelligence on WRC. The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU, 2022) Strategic Assessment highlighted the work of the North Wales Police Rural Crime Unit, which reportedly reduced 80 per cent of wildlife crime incidents reported locally through increased engagement with local rural communities. The use of media, social media, and technology (e.g., smartphone apps) and engagement at community events, was also recognised to increase public awareness and encourage reporting of WRC to the police.
- 1.13 The impact of police-community partnerships was also highlighted in the Welsh Farm and Rural Crime survey (Norris and Morris, 2022). Although the findings showed a decline in victim crime reporting across Wales, it also indicated a positive increase in public perceptions of the police (particularly regarding their increased focus on farm and rural crime) over time. However, the findings echoed a significant concern highlighted in other studies (United Nations, 2021) regarding the perceived lack of action leading to WRC prosecutions and convictions.
- 1.14 Multi-agency partnerships and multi-strategy approaches to prevent and investigate wildlife crime were also suggested in research by the NWCU (2017 & 2022). The NWCU strategy recommended stakeholder collaboration through Priority Delivery Groups (PDGs), working groups and national operations. Their research emphasised the need for a coordinated partnership approach between statutory and non-statutory bodies in Wales. Therefore, collaboration with stakeholders and partners across Wales and the UK is central to protecting, preventing, and reducing WRC. Further, UK enforcement agencies and partners have, in recent years, recognised

commonalities in wildlife and rural offences and, consequently, the benefits of unifying their responses to these offences (NPCC, 2022; NFU Cymru & NFU, 2017).

Enforcement training and knowledge requirements to support tackling WRC

- 1.15 There are many competing priorities for the police and their partners. The NWCU (2017) research recognised the impact of financial restrictions and conflicting priorities on WCOs' (Wildlife Crime Officers) abilities to find sufficient time to respond to wildlife crime incidents. They found officers frequently performed their wildlife enforcement duties in addition to their full-time position within the police, and were often appointed with little understanding of wildlife crime. This impacted officers' ability to deal with wildlife crime and resulted in high staff turnover in these roles. In turn, the lack of continuity resulted in stakeholders, including the public, being told wildlife crime incidents were not a matter for the police, reducing confidence in the enforcement approach.
- 1.16 As evidenced by the United Nations (2021) report, responding to wildlife crimes requires dedicated training and skills, but also economic and organisational capacity which enables enforcement agencies to cover large geographical areas. The NWCU's Strategic Assessment (2022) and research (2017) called for consistent national accredited courses, wildlife crime awareness packages for probation workers and training and awareness for force call handlers and control room staff.

Limitations with WRC data

- 1.17 The limitations of administrative data (collected by statutory bodies, including the CJS) on WRC is well documented in existing research (United Nations, 2021; NWCU, 2022; NPCC, 2022). Accurate data on the prevalence and nature of these offences is hindered by: the limited number of wildlife offences which are recordable and notifiable⁴, low offence detection and reporting rates, restricted data granularity in recorded data, offences being lost within volume crime statistics, different recording and analysis practices between different police areas, poor and incompatible recording and reporting practices among statutory bodies and criminal

⁴ An offence has notifiable status when the police must inform the Home Office of recorded incidents by completing a crime report form for statistical purposes. Offences defined as minor (e.g., not attracting a prison sentence) are not recorded on the Police National Computer. A shortlist composed by the NWCU and Link (2021) suggests an initial 24 wildlife crimes which should be made notifiable [Shortlist of wildlife crimes to be made notifiable 18.02.21.pdf \(wcl.org.uk\)](#).

justice agencies⁵, and the accessibility of data and databases for analysis. Research often turns to NGO⁶ or business data to provide a more complete record of incidents, however, the accuracy and utility of these data to statutory bodies has been questioned, and there are barriers to effective data sharing (United Nations, 2021).

- 1.18 In response to these challenges, existing research on wildlife crime recommended making wildlife crimes recordable and notifiable, training to ensure consistency in reporting and recording of these crimes, developing a centralised and bespoke database for wildlife crime, placing legal responsibilities on statutory bodies to record and annually report on incidents and outcomes, enhanced data and intelligence sharing thorough 'Information Sharing Agreements'.

Previous research on WRC Coordinator and Strategy

- 1.19 In December 2022, the Welsh Government and the WRC Coordinator conducted a targeted stakeholder consultation to inform the Wales WRC Strategy 2023-2025 (WG, 2023). This included feedback from WRC police officers, Police and Crime Commissioners, statutory organisations, and NGOs representing crime victims and protecting wildlife, other animals and the environment.
- 1.20 The WG (2023) consultation report found ninety percent of respondents recognised the direct benefits and advantages resulting from the Coordinator role. Three quarters of respondents directly acknowledged the positive impact of the WRC Coordinator role in fostering improved relationships among WRC stakeholders. Most respondents reported some level of interaction with their local Wildlife and Rural Crime Officers, but also expressed a desire for increased engagement.
- 1.21 The consultation report also revealed that all police teams had made use of the varied training courses provided during the initial 18 months of the WRC Coordination Programme, and these had raised awareness of the importance of WRC among the police in Wales.
- 1.22 In terms of accurate and accessible data on WRC, the Welsh Government consultation report revealed that not all stakeholders surveyed possessed data pertaining to WRC. However, many (62 per cent) that did, expressed a willingness to

⁵ For example, proposals before the Scottish Government, to extend the Scottish SPCA's current powers to investigate wildlife crime (Scottish Government 2023), could have significant impact on the detection of wildlife crime and subsequent offence data in Scotland, in comparison to Wales.

⁶ A significant number of wildlife crime offences are enforced by NGOs in England and Wales

share it within the boundaries of responsible data-sharing practices. The inconsistency in data recording and availability is identified as a significant concern, primarily because it hampers the accurate assessment of the true scale and impact of criminal activities in rural areas, and the resources necessary to prevent them (WG, 2023).

- 1.23 In summary, existing research highlights both the challenges and opportunities in responding to WRC in Wales. Evidently, the Welsh Government and statutory agencies cannot address these alone. The literature supports the need for a dedicated coordinator (WRC Coordinator) and programme of work (WRC Coordination Programme) which facilitates collaboration, data and resource sharing across enforcement agencies, statutory partners and stakeholders. Furthermore, it indicates an effective and sustainable response necessitates increased capacity and skills and stakeholder engagement. To support future development, monitoring and evaluation of Programme and Coordinator role, the need for a ToC was identified by the WG.

Report Overview

- 1.24 The report now outlines the methodology underpinning the research, clarifying the scope and focus of the ToC in Section two. Section three examines the research findings, presenting the ToC and associated ToC LM, and the underlying context, rationale, and assumptions in its development. Section four provides a concluding summary on the research findings, followed by the key recommendations in Section five.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 This section provides detail on the research methodology. This includes clarifying the scope of the Theory of Change (ToC), detailing the empirical data collection and document content analysis used to inform the ToC, ethics and data management and methodological limitations.
- 2.2 The research adopted a qualitative mixed method research strategy to achieve the aim and objectives detailed above. The mixed method approach brought together multiple sources of data (i.e. methodological triangulation) to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings (Copes and Miller, 2015). The research strategy considered the short time frame and resources available to engage with stakeholders. A principally qualitative approach enabled an in depth understanding of the wider cultural and individual context of the programme and to probe the assumptions underlying stakeholder perspectives on the wildlife and rural crime (WRC) Coordination Programme inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (Wincup, 2017). The research strategy involved (1) content analyses of existing Programme documentation; and (2) empirical qualitative research with twenty key stakeholders through one interview and three focus groups. The methods involved are outlined below and linked to the stated key objectives.

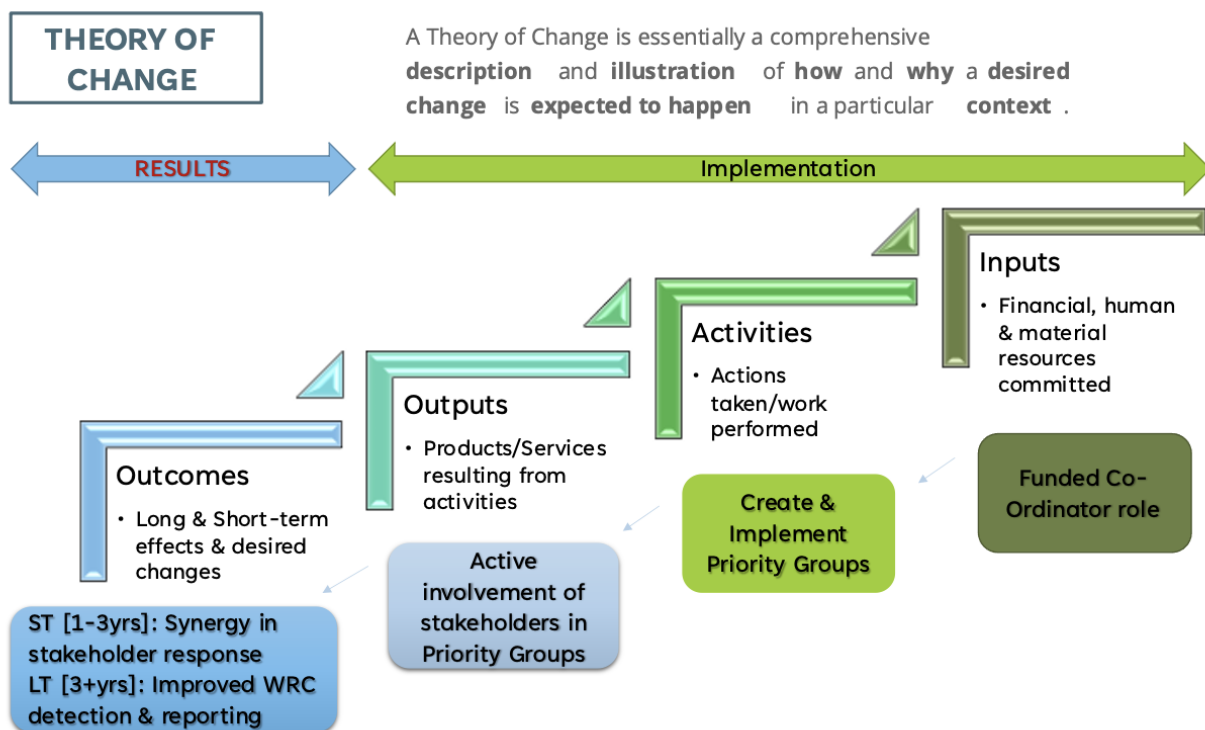
Theory of Change (ToC)

- 2.3 Developing a Theory of Change Logic Model (ToC LM) was central to the research methodology. The purpose of a ToC is to develop a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context and intervention. It makes explicit the activities, conditions and assumptions required to enable change by articulating the change process within an intervention to achieve its outputs and outcomes.
- 2.4 ToC are dynamic, and are intended to be modified throughout the data collection and analysis process. Developing the ToC was an iterative process, requiring first, consultation with those who informed and implemented the development of the Programme (interview and focus group one) and second, consultation with key stakeholders on a draft ToC (focus groups two and three) to reflect on how the Programme could bring about change. Engaging members of the implementation

team and key stakeholders, early in the programme development is consistent with best practice in developing a ToC (De Silva and Lee, nd).

2.5 The ToC LM graphically illustrates programme components and provides a snapshot view of how the ToC intervention will achieve its goals. The ToC supports the Logic Model by linking outcomes and activities, to explain how and why the desired change is expected to come about. Figure 2 details the ToC process adopted with focus group participants⁷ to explain how the ToC worked and could be applied to the WRC Coordination Programme.

Figure 2: Example Theory of Change Logic Model Diagram used in Focus Groups



Content analysis of existing documentation

2.6 To address the first two project objectives, the research began by reviewing strategic documentation and outputs from the WRC Coordination Programme through content analysis⁸. The documents included all current and historic

⁷ ToC usually work from Inputs to Outcomes as per Figure 3, however, this order was reversed to facilitate discussions in focus groups.

⁸ Content analysis is used to identify and analyse patterns and interpret meaning from documents and other communication mediums (Bryman, 2021; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

documents that were identified by the Welsh Government (WG) and Coordinator as providing context on both the development of the Programme and Coordinator role, and current activities and outputs. This analysis provided insights into the relevance and soundness of the assumptions and evidence used to develop the WRC Coordination Programme, and to assess the rationale. Twenty-four documents relating to the WRC Coordination Programme were uploaded to NVIVO 12 for analysis. The coding scheme included analysing the data for the following themes: definition, nature and focus of the programme, existing and expected WRC Coordination Programme inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, and the availability of data to evaluate and support the programme. The findings were used to form the data collection schedules of, and cross-check data from, the interview and focus groups.

Empirical research with key stakeholders

- 2.7 In order to address project Objectives Two, Three and Four, it was essential to collect new (empirical) data. This involved a semi-structured qualitative interview and three focus groups, which were recorded and professionally transcribed for thematic analysis in NVIVO 12.

Semi-structured qualitative interview with the WRC Coordinator

- 2.8 The WRC Coordinator's experience of developing their role and understanding of the key aims, challenges, achievements, and future direction of the role was captured in the interview. It was important to directly capture the complexity of the Coordinator's experience and perceptions, which was not possible in a focus group setting. The interview expanded and contextualised the data captured in the content analysis and informed the focus groups' schedules and sample participant recruitment. The online interview took place on Microsoft Teams.

Focus groups

- 2.9 The research team conducted three focus groups, involving twenty participants from a population of 65 individuals identified by the WG and WRC Coordinator as

stakeholders in the Programme. Purposive sampling⁹ of this population identified stakeholders which represented a range of positions, roles, organisations and regions, and the diverse issues relating to both WRC. The focus groups captured rich qualitative data on stakeholders' understanding of, engagement with, and expectations of the WRC Coordination Programme, and how these could be mapped to the ToC. Focus group numbers were set to between six and nine participants to ensure a range of perspectives would be heard, while also allowing detailed discussion on the Programme and ToC within a two-hour focus group.

- 2.10 While topic guides were developed for each focus group in advance to ensure the key issues were considered, the method also provided the flexibility necessary for participants to highlight and expand on issues important to them. Each group emphasised different topics in line with their role, experiences, interests and priorities. This format facilitated development of a ToC which was inclusive, and balanced in considering the competing priorities of the diverse stakeholder group. Participants were directed to focus on the WRC Coordination Programme rather than the Coordinator role holder. This recognised the broader programme of work in place and the central role partners and stakeholders have in delivery of the programme.
- 2.11 Table 1 provides an overview of the research methods and sample achieved, and links these to the research objectives. The rationale for separating enforcement and non-enforcement participants was to facilitate open engagement and foster effective and focused discussions. While an online focus group was identified as preferable for enforcement participants to avoid disruption to their duties, a face-to-face focus group was organised for non-enforcement stakeholders. To facilitate participation, non-enforcement stakeholders attending an annual WRC conference were invited to engage in the focus group after the event.

⁹ Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which targets a particular group of participants based on specific characteristics. In this case, a heterogeneous approach was taken to select participants with diverse characteristics to represent the variety of stakeholders responding to WRC.

Table 1: Summary of Methods, Sample Achieved and Objectives

| Method | Population | Sample | Timeline | Research Objective |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Content analysis | Existing WRC Coordination Programme documents | 24 sources | February | One, two |
| Semi-structured interview | WRC Coordinator role holder | One | March | Two, three, four |
| Focus group one (online) | Welsh Government stakeholders <i>Including: WRC Coordinator and WG employees responsible for Programme implementation</i> | Five | March | Two, three, four |
| Focus group two (face to face) | Non-enforcement stakeholders <i>Including: third sector organisations and NGOs representing the farming community, crime victims and mental health support and those responding to marine, wildlife, heritage and environmental crimes</i> | Nine | April | Two, three, four |
| Focus group three (online) | Enforcement stakeholders <i>Including: Wales police areas and enforcement agencies with a wider UK remit</i> | Six | April | Two, three, four |

Ethics and Data Management

2.12 Principles outlined in the Social Research Association ethics guidance (2021) and GSR professional guidance (Government Social Research, 2021) were followed. Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the work and how their data would be held. Anonymised data have been used in this report and only the organisation, wider sector or job roles of research participants have been included to avoid identification of participants. This decision was taken as many

stakeholders were at risk of identification by a combination of their organisation, job role and the knowledge that they work closely with the WRC Coordinator.

Research Limitations

- 2.13 Despite the robust methodology implemented there are limitations to the research, these include the terminology used, stakeholder engagement and resources. During the focus groups, it became evident that terminology, such as the WRC Coordination Programme, was confusing for some participants (see Findings – Context). That is, most participants did not explicitly understand what the Programme encompassed. This encouraged lengthy and important discussions in the focus groups, but subsequently reduced the time available for discussing other aspects of the ToC. During the period of data collection, the Strategy was released, which meant some stakeholders expressed views that were informed by this development, while others did not.
- 2.14 The research prioritised engaging with a range of stakeholders who had detailed understanding and knowledge of WRC and responses in Wales and the UK. The Strategy recognises the importance of engaging with rural communities, however, it was not within the project's scope to involve these communities in the research. Future research (i.e., Programme evaluation) would benefit from gathering the perspectives of rural communities.
- 2.15 Not all stakeholders who were interested in the research were able to engage, due to focus group sample restrictions and role constraints. For example, some enforcement stakeholders expressed interest but were unable to attend the scheduled workshop. As the ToC is an iterative model, the research team suggest seeking further opportunities for stakeholder input through additional focus groups.
- 2.16 While research identifies that both online and face-to-face focus groups can produce the same quality of data, there are benefits to face-to-face engagement (Bozkurt, 2018). In this research, the benefits of using online methods (e.g., less time for stakeholders away from work) outweighed the possible benefits (e.g., utilising non-verbal communication, enhanced group dynamics). Nonetheless, with additional resources the project may have benefitted from further in-person engagement.

3. Findings

- 3.1 This section presents the findings arising from thematic analysis of Programme documents and interview and focus group data. These findings are wholly informed by the data analysis resulting from this research. Further discussion on how these relate to the broader context and literature is provided in the Concluding section.
- 3.2 A discussion on the definition of the Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordination Programme and WRC is first provided to clarify the focus of the Theory of Change (ToC). This is followed by an evaluation of the barriers to achieving the WRC Coordination Programme outcomes. The ToC is then visually presented as a Logic Model (ToC LM), and each section explored in turn, starting with the outcomes. The risks and assumptions underlying the ToC are then explored. It is worth noting that some themes are common across this section (e.g., the limitations of offence data).
- 3.3 Extracts from the data are presented here to evidence the discussion, with identifiers linked to the relevant participants. Participants are identified by their sector and/or role as follows: Welsh Government (WG) stakeholder (linked to interview one and focus group one), UK or Welsh enforcement stakeholder (linked to focus group two) and type of non-enforcement stakeholder (linked to focus group three). Documents are referenced by their title and date (e.g., Wales Rural Crime Coordinator, 2022).
- 3.4 The term 'participant/s' is used to identify data from the one interview and three focus groups for simplicity.¹⁰ Where the views are expressed by one or a few individuals this is clarified.

Context

- 3.5 Four context subcategories were identified in developing the ToC, these refer to the challenges of defining the remit of the WRC Coordination Programme, barriers to policy and Programme capacity, barriers to people and processes, and barriers to resources and data. The findings illustrate the internal and external factors influencing Programme development highlighted in documents and by participants.

¹⁰ Quotations relating to these distinct methods will still be evident in the identifiers provided.

Defining the remit of the WRC Coordination Programme

- 3.6 As the Coordinator role has expanded with the development of a formal Strategy and a rapidly growing network of stakeholders, the response to WRC has been framed by the WG as a programme of work (WRC Coordination Programme). The overarching strategic aim of the Wales WRC Strategy was supported by all research participants who were familiar with the WRC Coordinator role and those recently introduced to the Strategy. The launch of the Strategy (WG, 2023) helped articulate the focus of the Programme as furthering the development of an all-Wales coordinated and effective response to WRC. The Programme is specifically tailored to Wales' needs; supporting the police and their partners to prevent crime, pursue those who commit it, and protect those most affected by it. It is also focused centrally on the communities, individuals, habitats, and wildlife most at risk of harm.
- 3.7 Overall, clarity on the remit, vision, and purpose of the WRC Coordination Programme` was lacking according to most participants (including government and enforcement officers). Participant's confusion appeared to be related to rapid Programme expansion and changes to the WRC Coordinator role and activities, along with the changing terminology used (e.g., 'Wales rural and wildlife police coordinator', 'Wales rural and wildlife crime coordinator', 'WRC coordinator'). Consequently, the ToC is part of the process of clarifying the focus and aims of the Programme. Participants who were involved in implementing the Programme recognised that initially, the overarching remit of the WRC Coordination Programme was to develop a more coordinated and informed enforcement response to WRC through the development of a Coordinator role and Strategy. Yet, as one participant concluded, with the WRC Coordinator's input, this has broadened significantly in the pilot year:
- "And right at the heart of it [WRC Coordination Programme] is the rural crime teams and the training. That's right at the heart because that's what we needed, somebody to co-ordinate all of that, but all these add-ons, we didn't know what we wanted, but we knew we wanted somebody with expertise to guide us in what is required" (WG stakeholder).
- 3.8 Although the overarching remit of the Programme to focus on wildlife and rural crime together had already been established and was understood by participants, this decision was questioned by some. Despite acknowledging an overlap between these offences, some participants indicated that combining the response risked

each offence type not being given equal attention, with rural crime prioritised over wildlife or vice versa. One UK enforcement participant identified that wildlife was commonly and successfully partnered with environmental crime and conservation in other countries.

- 3.9 Issues were also identified with the definition of WRC and the types of offences the Programme should cover. Participants argued wildlife crime was easier to define than rural crime, which was said to be broadly and variably defined. Heritage crimes, for example, did not neatly fit as it was said by one expert participant to be as common in urban as rural areas. However, its inclusion in the WRC remit was recognised as important as it would not otherwise be addressed by the police. More broadly, participants questioned the inclusion of common offences, such as domestic violence, in the WRC definition and the Strategy priorities (see Wales WRC Strategy priorities below). Both non-enforcement and enforcement participants noted that all police areas are required to respond to mainstream offences¹¹. While WG stakeholders and the Strategy¹² recognised rural communities needed to receive an effective response to routine crimes, it was unclear to other participants why a WRC Officer would lead or prioritise this response. In essence, participants cautioned against using a 'catch-all' definition as the Wildlife and Rural Crime Officers (WRC Officers) remit was already considerable, given the range of offences unique to WRC and the limited resources available to respond to them.
- 3.10 As part of these definition discussions, the rationale for the inclusion of different offence types in the WRC priority areas set out in the Strategy was also questioned by some. These priority areas directly influence Programme activities and focus. The Wales WRC Strategy was informed by a risk assessment which included stakeholder consultation feedback, wildlife and rural crime research data and the NPCC strategy. The majority of feedback from the consultation indicated stakeholders supported the six priority groups (PGs): farm crime, habitats, mammals and European protected species, bird crime, Welsh police rural supervisors and mental health and domestic violence. However, enforcement and non-enforcement participants desired further transparency in how the PGs were

¹¹ For example, most police stations have Domestic Violence Units or Community Safety Units with specially trained officers to deal with domestic violence and abuse according to The Policing in Wales VAWDASV taskforce.

¹² The Strategy refers to unique conditions in rural areas which give rise to these offences and solutions.

identified, assessed, and the rationale for inclusion evidenced. One comment which was echoed by other respondents, questioned whether the priorities exist “...because of a genuine need, or are we just going off in different directions because of personal focus?” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

- 3.11 The discussion on Strategy PGs gave rise to questions on the geographical scope of the WRC Coordination Programme and how compatible the PGs were with existing UK WRC strategies. As wildlife and rural crime transcends country boundaries, participants argued so too must an effective response. They noted this required consistency in priorities and approaches across the UK. The NWCUC strategic assessment (2022) and the NPCC Strategy (2022) PGs are comparable¹³, however their focus and categorisations vary from the Wales WRC Strategy PGs (see Annex B). In particular, the overarching priorities of cyber-enabled or serious and organised crime highlighted in the existing UK strategies are not addressed in the WRC Coordination Programme. All participants recognised the need for each strategy to prioritise what is relevant to their scope (e.g., the NWCUC does not focus on rural crime) and geographical region and communities (e.g., south-east forces in England prioritise puppy farms), yet the lack of synergy was also questioned. Some argued that failure to link Welsh priorities to broader UK strategies, and vice versa, risks discord, resulting in an inconsistent response and barriers to collaboration, partnership, and data sharing.
- 3.12 Participants wholly supported the vision of an All-Wales focused Programme. Yet, enforcement (in particular) argued that this cannot be a siloed approach; one UK enforcement stakeholder identified that “the essential stuff” or core parts need to be consistent and informed by best practice across the UK to avoid duplication and maximise resources. Others noted that rural communities, and thereby police forces, each have their own challenges and needs, demanding a fluid response. The Wales WRC Strategy recognises the need for both synergy and flexibility, but participants questioned how such harmonisation will be applied in practice.
- 3.13 The WG participants explained that the WRC Coordination Programme had developed from small-scale funding and rudimentary ideas, which were tested during the pilot year. The document analysis has evidenced the key focus of the

¹³ The wildlife crime priorities in the NPCC (2022) strategy are informed by the strategic assessment carried out by NWCUC (2022), hence the wildlife crime priorities are the same in both strategies. As there is no equivalent NWCUC assessment for rural crime the NPCC independently assessed rural crime PGs.

Programme has involved supporting a more robust and collaborative response to WRC for many stakeholders. More specifically, it is clear from the data that the Programme is successfully facilitating an all-Wales coordinated response, which supports enforcement agencies and statutory partners in delivering an effective and sustainable response, tailored to protecting Welsh rural communities, habitats and animals. Participants added, the key role of partners and stakeholders in delivering the Programme (e.g., all CJS agencies) should also be a central focus. Furthermore, the Programme vision should recognise how it can contribute to broader political, institutional, and cultural change in the prioritisation of, and responses and attitudes to WRC¹⁴. Some stakeholders noted that these suggestions were not necessarily within the gift of the Welsh Government (e.g., due to non-devolved powers and external influences) and cautioned the vision must also reflect this.

- 3.14 Stakeholder discussions highlighted some of the challenges in defining the scope of the WRC Coordination Programme, which linked to the barriers in Programme delivery addressed below.

Barriers to Policy and Programme Delivery

- 3.15 Wildlife and rural crime includes devolved and non-devolved responsibilities in Wales. Policing and criminal justice in Wales are part of the UK government remit, while the WG have devolved powers relating to environment, heritage, and wildlife. Stakeholders noted this, alongside cultural differences amongst statutory organisations in their response to WRC, may result in shifting and unclear responsibility and inconsistency in Programme engagement. WRC is a complex and cross border crime, supporting participants argument for strong partnerships amongst Wales and UK organisations, and across government departments to support Programme delivery.
- 3.16 All participants noted that communication is central to achieving Programme aims. For instance, the WRC Coordinator provides communications documents such as Newsletters to stakeholders to keep them informed and involved. Yet, many participants also argued that the limited understanding of the Programme vision and

¹⁴ This refers to the broad understanding that WRC is not adequately prioritised among government and statutory agencies.

the rationale for the strategic priority areas of focus (i.e., PGs) may result in stakeholders resisting the desired Programme change. Furthermore, they suggested overstepping (e.g., into non-devolved areas), overstretching (e.g., focus, activities, and goals) and failure to evidence outcomes would also impact Programme sustainability. Essentially, balancing the competing priorities of so many (UK and Wales) stakeholders and the broad reach of wildlife and rural crimes, with the available powers and resources, and data limitations were considered by stakeholders to represent key barriers to policy and Programme delivery.

Barriers to People and Processes

- 3.17 Data analysis indicated that high staff turnover among WRC officers has resulted in regular loss of expertise and networks. Due to the complexity of WRC, considerable time is required to re-establish this knowledge and understanding. Both enforcement and non-enforcement stakeholders recognised that the Programme sits within a legacy of CJS agencies not understanding, prioritising, or responding effectively to WRC. It was suggested by participants that lack of prioritisation at all levels of the CJS reduces management support, buy-in to collaboration, resource sharing and the development of dedicated roles and expertise, which is crucial to the Programme.
- 3.18 Participants also noted that lack of active participation and reciprocal benefits for stakeholders would obstruct the Strategy, as it cannot be delivered by enforcement agencies alone. The Programme must be able to represent and engage the large number and varied types of stakeholders involved, all who express different needs and priorities. However, attempting to fulfil these diverse needs will impact on the focus and resources of the Programme. This includes the desired buy-in from rural communities. However, poor public confidence in the police and processes, as noted in the existing research, may present a barrier to such engagement.
- 3.19 Evidence from both the documentation and participants indicate that Programme development and execution is largely dependent on the WRC Coordinator role. The current role holder is widely recognised by participants to have brought experience, expertise, knowledge, positive relationships, networks, charisma, and energy to the WRC Coordination Programme. Changes to the role holder may therefore impact the sustainability of the Programme.

Barriers to Resources and Data

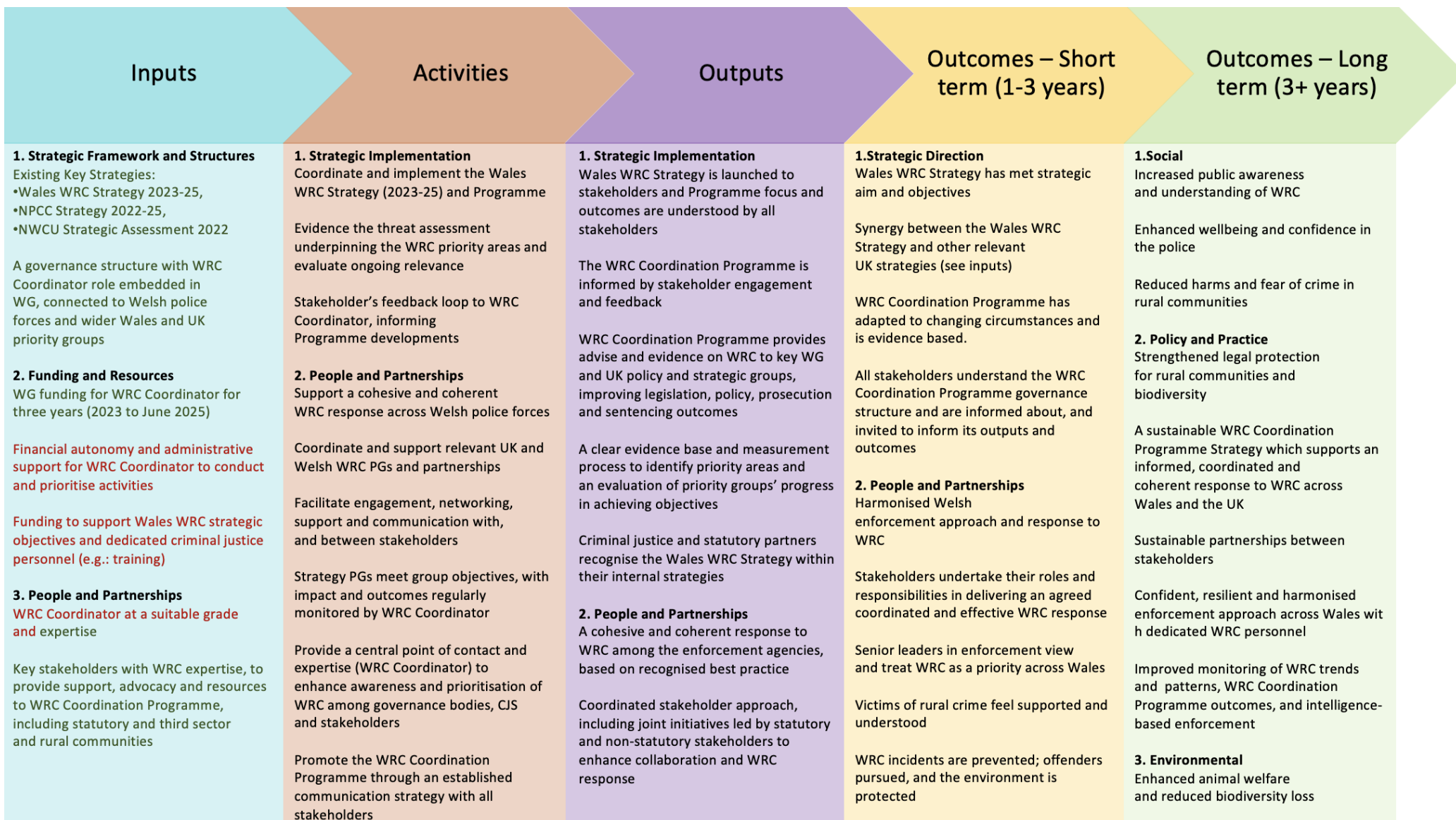
- 3.20 Insufficient resourcing of the Programme was viewed by participants as impacting both the WRC Coordinator role and Wales WRC Strategy objectives. WG participants noted the need for resources to support the Coordinator role. Other participants did not specify what the funding should be used for, but agreed the range of Programme activities highlighted (see Activities below) were necessary and emphasised that Programme outcomes would not be achievable without more funding.
- 3.21 Reliable and accessible data was viewed by most participants as the cornerstone to WRC Coordination Programme success. Views provided included:
- enforcement responses rely on the ability to make data-driven decisions,
 - accurate measurement is necessary to evidence the impact of WRC and the responses in place,
 - the Strategy priorities must be data-informed
 - Programme outcomes must be measurable.

Yet data limitations were viewed by all as problematic, and by some as an “insurmountable” barrier (Animal NGO stakeholder). Administrative data limitations were consistent with those discussed above (see 1.17) in the existing research (e.g., inaccurate reporting and recording of WRC). Additionally, they noted the limitations of data analysis due to relevant data held by diverse agencies and in different databases, barriers to data sharing among stakeholders, and the absence of scholarly research to enhance administrative data.

ToC Logic Model

- 3.22 The ToC LM is visually presented in Figure 3, each section is, thereafter, explained in turn, starting with the outcomes, outputs, activities, and inputs.

Figure 3: Logic Model



| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>4. Data and Intelligence Findings from the Wales WRC Strategy consultation with stakeholders</p> <p>Reliable and consistent identification, recording, and analysis of WRC incidents by police forces and CJS</p> <p>Accessible and collated WRC data from stakeholders and scholarly research</p> | <p>3. Capacity and Resources Develop and facilitate essential WRC training package and mentoring opportunities for enforcement officers</p> <p>Partnership work which supports intelligence, expertise and resource sharing among officers and stakeholders</p> <p>4. Data and Intelligence Raise awareness on the importance of accurate and accessible WRC data across the CJS and partner organisations</p> <p>Conduct stakeholder and data mapping to identify data sharing opportunities</p> <p>Facilitate robust WRC recording, reporting, analysis and data sharing practices across Welsh police forces</p> | <p>Expert priority groups, based on WRC priority areas, representing the diversity and expertise of stakeholders, which meet regularly and work towards achieving specified objectives.</p> <p>Better informed and resourced stakeholder partnerships</p> <p>3. Capacity and Resources Appropriate support and resources are available for stakeholders to meet the Wales WRC Strategy goals</p> <p>Enhanced capacity, specialist training and resource sharing among enforcement agencies</p> <p>The profile of WRC is raised among enforcement agencies, facilitating recruitment and retention of WRC officers and personnel</p> | <p>3. Capacity and Resources WRC enforcement officers and stakeholders have the increased capacity and capability to deliver the Wales WRC Strategy</p> <p>WRC enforcement officers and teams are confident, informed and resilient</p> <p>4. Data and Intelligence A comprehensive understanding and accurate baseline on the nature and prevalence of WRC and outcomes</p> <p>MOUs and ISAs facilitate closer stakeholder partnerships and data sharing</p> <p>Enriched WRC data collection strategy informed by administrative, stakeholder and scholarly data</p> | |
| <p>Colour Key Green – currently in place Red – not currently provided</p> | <p>Collect reliable, valid and timely WRC Coordination Programme monitoring data, utilising established processes where possible</p> | <p>All CJS agencies are collaborating and working towards WRC Coordination Programme goals</p> | <p>WRC intelligence informs strategic operations, especially those targeting the most prolific and serious and organised crimes</p> | |
| <p>Acronyms Key CJS – Criminal Justice System ISA – Information Sharing Agreement MOU – Memorandum of Understanding NPCC – National Police Chiefs’ Council NWCU – National Wildlife Crime Unit PGs – Priority Delivery Groups UK – United Kingdom WG – Welsh Government WRC – Wildlife and Rural Crime WRC Coordinator – Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordinator WRC Coordination Programme – Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme Wales WRC Strategy – Wales Wildlife and Rural Crime Strategy</p> | <p>Enhance WRC data with scholarly research</p> | <p>4. Data and Intelligence A WRC Coordination Programme data collection strategy informed by data mapping exercise of stakeholder and scholarly data, and responsible data sharing</p> <p>Standardised WRC data collection and analysis strategy across enforcement agencies</p> <p>Robust WRC Coordination Programme monitoring data</p> | | |

Outcomes

- 3.23 Outcomes refer to the long- and short-term Programme effects and changes resulting from the outputs. Analysis of documents and empirical data highlighted desired long and short-term impacts. The barriers to achieving these outcomes are detailed above.

Outcomes – Long term (three+ years)

- 3.24 These outcomes refer to the long-term Programme's effects and changes resulting from the outputs. In line with funding for the WRC Coordinator role, long term outcomes look beyond the three-year period and focus on broader social, policy, practice, and environmental impacts. It is important to note that rather than the Programme directly affecting these outcomes, it will indirectly achieve these broader goals by facilitating the expertise and conditions for a more robust enforcement and collaborative response.

Social Impacts

- 3.25 According to participants the WRC Coordination Programme should aim to achieve a lasting impact by **increasing public knowledge and understanding of wildlife and rural crime.**

"I think awareness is absolutely critical. It's really critical" (Suicide prevention NGO stakeholder).

"I think what we need to do is raise the public awareness of these things, of being crimes in the first place and we should start off at schools et cetera" (UK enforcement stakeholder).

This would result in people being better equipped to recognise and report any illegal activities related to WRC. Additionally, participants suggested that the Programme should **enhance the overall community wellbeing and confidence in the police.** This implies that because of the Programme, individuals and communities would experience an improved sense of safety, trust, and satisfaction in their interactions with enforcement agencies. This applies also to stakeholder participants who reported they were more likely to engage in meaningful partnerships if they had trust in the enforcement response.

3.26 To achieve enhanced wellbeing and confidence in the police, the analysis highlighted **rural communities must experience a reduction in harm and fear of crime**. This means the Programme should aim to create a safer environment for rural areas by decreasing both the actual instances of crime and the perception of fear associated with criminal activities. By addressing and mitigating these concerns, it was suggested the WRC Coordination Programme seeks to foster a sense of security and wellbeing among the residents of rural communities.

Policy and Practice Impacts

3.27 While participants cautioned the importance of managing Programme expectations and not exceeding its capabilities, they agreed that long-term it should aim to **strengthen legal protection and improve offence outcomes for both rural communities and biodiversity**. As one stakeholder emphasised:

“Legislation for us is a number one priority” (Marine NGO stakeholder).

3.28 The Programme is not intended to lobby or influence policy, yet the analysis indicated that it can and does provide expertise on WRC, and related policy and responses. The Programme also seeks to establish robust and effective mechanisms which ensure the enforcement of laws and regulations relating to rural communities, habitats and wildlife. This includes better offence outcomes for victims through enhanced detection, investigation, and prosecution of WRC offences.

3.29 Another key outcome evident in the documents and discussed by participants is the development of **a sustainable Strategy that facilitates an informed, coordinated, and coherent response to wildlife and rural crime across Wales and the UK**. Participants recognised that by fostering coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, conservation organisations, and local communities, the Strategy seeks to maximise the collective impact of WRC responses.

3.30 **Sustainable partnerships between and within statutory, non-statutory and community stakeholders** must be underpinned by mutual aims and benefits. That is, participants implied they must believe in the value of the Programme in achieving joint and independent goals. They also desired resilient partnerships which would endure beyond the duration of the Strategy, ensuring the sustainability of the Programme in addressing WRC issues and achieving shared conservation goals.

3.31 The **establishment of a confident and resilient enforcement approach that is harmonised across Wales**, with dedicated WRC officers is both a key Programme outcome and a requirement for achieving the other outcomes. This goal entails creating a law enforcement framework that instils confidence among officers and equips them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively address WRC issues.

3.32 Another outcome central to the Programme and achieving the expected impact is **improved monitoring of wildlife and rural offences, WRC Coordination Programme outcomes and intelligence led enforcement**. All participants emphasised the Programme must facilitate accurate and accessible data on WRC to support the effective targeting of effort and resources, and evidence Programme impact:

“You need to be able to have a co-ordinated strategy of data collection across Wales which I think is missing” (Farming Association stakeholder).

Environmental Impacts

3.33 WRC Coordination Programme outcomes should align with other Welsh Government environmental goals, by **enhancing animal welfare and reducing biodiversity loss**.

“There’s also the fact that biodiversity and wildlife benefit from this work because that’s the end result ... we can expect there to be some preventative element happening.” (WG stakeholder)

3.34 The Programme would improve the welfare of animals by mitigating and preventing wildlife and rural offences that harm or exploit animals. This includes addressing illegal activities such as poaching, trafficking, habitat destruction, equine and livestock crimes, and pollution that directly impacts wildlife populations. By reducing these offences, the WRC Coordination Programme would ensure farm animals and wildlife are protected, enhancing both nonhuman and human welfare.

Outcomes – Short term (one-three years)

3.35 These outcomes refer to the Programme’s short-term effects and changes resulting from the outputs. In line with funding for the WRC Coordinator role, short term

outcomes look within the current three-year funding period, and focus on strategic direction, people and partnerships, capacity and resources, and data and intelligence.

Strategic Direction

- 3.36 Strategic direction refers to both oversight and clarity on the core focus of the Programme. In particular, ensuring **successful execution of the Wales WRC Strategy aims and objectives and enhanced synergy between the WRC Coordination Programme and other pertinent UK strategies** (NPCC, 2022, NWCUC, 2022). Participants argued this would entail meeting the needs of Welsh communities, while also contributing to the wider UK response. Synergy between these strategies can enhance Programme resources, knowledge, and expertise, leading to a more efficient and effective response to WRC.
- 3.37 Throughout the discussion on outcomes, participants stressed the need for **Programme adaptability to evolving circumstances while maintaining an evidence-based approach**. This recognises the Programme may need to respond to changing internal (e.g., WRC Coordinator role holder) and external (e.g., changes in WRC, stakeholder engagement, policy change) factors. It also captures participants' desire for informed and data-driven decision making when responding to such changes (e.g., in choosing PGs).
- 3.38 Other key outcomes highlighted by participants were greater stakeholder understanding of the WRC Coordination Programme governance structure, outputs and outcomes. A **robust governance structure, understood by stakeholders**, will ensure that clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes are established and communicated to all involved parties. Linked to this, participants argued the need for **well-informed stakeholders who understand the WRC Coordination Programme and its outputs and outcomes**. Participants suggested that both of these outcomes would foster transparency, accountability, enhanced collaboration and a shared understanding of the Programme's progress and achievements. As explained in the Context section, participants noted the importance of clear channels of communication to ensure that relevant information reaches stakeholders.

3.39 Likewise, **stakeholders should actively be encouraged to provide insights and feedback to inform Programme strategic direction** as part of the communication strategy.

“If we’re serious about strategy direction coming from stakeholders then that’s what it needs to be. We each need to identify those gaps, weaknesses and priorities and then design outcomes that are completely measurable and easily understood by every stakeholder” (Farming Association stakeholder).

3.40 By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, the WRC Coordination Programme benefits from diverse perspectives and ultimately fosters a collaborative response to WRC.

People and Partnerships

3.41 The Programme needs to ensure the right people and organisations are involved in Programme delivery. Analysis of both documents and participants identified **achieving synergy in the approach and response to wildlife and rural crime among the police forces operating in Wales**, as a key outcome. This outcome focuses on enhancing collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among enforcement to address the unique challenges and threats posed by WRC. This would also provide opportunities for information sharing, joint training, and coordinated operational strategies. As discussed in the Context section, however, balance is required to ensure flexibility to respond to local contexts.

3.42 Linked to this, another short-term outcome identified was the importance of **stakeholders undertaking their roles and responsibilities in delivering an agreed, coordinated, and effective response**. Both the documents and participants evidenced the Programme successfully connects a diverse range of stakeholders. The effectiveness of the WRC Coordination Programme relies on sustaining this level of engagement. As one participant explained agencies can become isolated in their response to WRC without coordination and clarity on roles and responsibilities:

“Stakeholders understanding their role within the big picture, not going it alone, it’s something that we’ve obviously come across and we’re dealing with it, and you could measure improvement on that” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

- 3.43 The importance of **senior leaders in enforcement throughout Wales perceiving and handling wildlife and rural crime as a priority**, was viewed by all participants as a necessary and consequential short-term outcome. As one participant noted: “mostly one of our problems is we [WRC] sit at the bottom of the pile in relation to force priorities in almost every degree and that’s quite difficult” (UK enforcement stakeholder).
- 3.44 Furthermore, this was considered to be important across the enforcement rank structure: “Quite often, you get good buy-in from high up the chain...it’s trying to sell it to the middle management, to enable them to enable their staff underneath them, the officers underneath them, to have the time to deal with it” (UK enforcement stakeholder).
- 3.45 The needs of WRC victims were also considered by participants who argued the Programme would result in **victims of wildlife and rural crime feeling supported and understood**. This outcome emphasises the importance of providing comprehensive and specific support services and resources to individuals and communities affected by WRC-related incidents.
- 3.46 Together these short-term outcomes support the broader expected outcome that the Programme would **prevent wildlife and rural crime incidents from occurring, increase the pursuit of offenders involved in wildlife and rural crime activities, and protect environments** vulnerable to WRC threats.

Capacity and Resources

- 3.47 Capacity and resources refer to the essential people, physical and data resources and organisational capacity necessary to ensure successful delivery of the WRC Coordination Programme.
- 3.48 Both the documents and participants indicated that the WRC Coordination Programme would **increase the capacity and capability of enforcement officers and stakeholders to effectively deliver the Wales WRC Strategy objectives**. Officer and stakeholder capacity and capability would be built through training, robust data and partnership work, for example. In promoting and sharing technology, the Programme aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of

enforcement activities. For instance, participants indicated that mobile apps and social media can provide enforcement officers with tools for real-time information sharing, data collection, and communication, enabling them to respond promptly to incidents or potential threats:

“there’s a good mix you can have with the use of drones and use of technology and LoRaWAN [long range wide area network] and using Twitter and using innovative things that are coming on the market” (Welsh Government stakeholder).

“In relation to the apps, I hope that within the Welsh strategy et cetera, they have signed up in relation to the new disc system that is being rolled out in relation to wildlife crime. It’s literally just come out but that’s another app which you can get on to your phone and will keep you up to date” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

- 3.49 Secondly, most participants recognised the value of the Programme in establishing **confident and informed WRC Officers, integrated into sustainable and resilient WRC Teams**. Specifically, the development of dedicated and expert officers and teams was viewed as crucial to responding to WRC threats and the security and wellbeing of the community.

Data and Intelligence

- 3.50 Data and intelligence capture the data requirements crucial to measuring WRC and evaluating the effectiveness of the WRC response, the WRC Coordination Programme and Wales WRC Strategy.
- 3.51 In this regard, a short-term outcome of the Programme highlighted by all participants was **a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and prevalence of WRCs and outcomes**. This outcome would establish an accurate measurement of WRC activities in the region, providing a reliable baseline. Linked to this, was the perceived need for **improved intelligence on WRC, which plays a pivotal role in informing strategic operations and responses, particularly those targeting serious and organised crime**. Both of these outcomes would inform decision making, resource allocation, and the development of effective enforcement strategies. This would empower enforcement agencies with the knowledge to proactively address the most harmful offences, contributing to safer communities.

3.52 The Programme not only requires **improved administrative data**, but could **enhance WRC data through partnerships with scholars and stakeholders**. By engaging with these partners, the WRC Coordination Programme would leverage their expertise and resources to enhance empirical evidence and understanding of WRC. The importance of this is addressed further below in activities and inputs. Linked to this is the **improvement in data sharing among stakeholders, facilitated through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and Information Sharing Agreements (ISA)**. Many participants felt this would foster closer partnerships between enforcement agencies and stakeholders and thereby support coordination.

“getting the decision makers, opinion formers or whatever, around the table to have that memorandum of understanding of what we need as stakeholders and what they can actually do, and just make it happen” (Marine NGO stakeholder).

Outputs

3.53 Outputs are the tangible or measurable products and services resulting from Programme activities, which can be used to determine, in the short-term, if outcomes are being achieved. As noted earlier, participants were reluctant to identify specific numbers with which to measure the outputs. They recognised that many variables outside the control of the Programme could impact such indicators and targets. For example, staff changes in enforcement or partner organisations may hinder collaboration and prioritisation, which may impact offence data metrics and engagement measurements. Similarly, if enhanced public confidence or officer training resulted in better detection and reporting of offences, this would appear as an increase in offences in administrative data. This could be interpreted as a failure in the enforcement response. Consequently, few of the outputs detail specific metrics, rather, existing, and proposed measurements are discussed in the Evaluation and Data section below. Outputs fall into four categories: strategic implementation, people and partnerships, capacity and resources and data and intelligence.

Strategic Implementation

- 3.54 Strategic implementation entails turning the strategic framework and structures into actions and outputs to achieve intended outcomes. To achieve WRC Coordination Programme outcomes, **stakeholders must understand the Programme and Strategy desired outcomes**. Participants indicated a measurable output was determining if these were **clearly communicated to all stakeholders**. Consequently, there is significant overlap between achieving strategic implementation and people and partnership outputs. For example, the **successful launch of the Wales WRC Strategy (2023)**, was a key output for participants, as it highlighted strategic developments, aims, objectives, delivery, and focus (priority areas and objectives) to stakeholders.
- 3.55 To support Programme understanding, participants desired further transparency **on the evidence base and measurement process used to identify priority areas**. They also determined **a process was required to evaluate if the priority groups were achieving their objectives**. Participants indicated they felt these groups should provide more than a simple information exchange (e.g., tangible outputs such as better data collection) and opinions varied as to the effectiveness of PGs in driving change.
- 3.56 Clarity on strategic implementation is crucial as partnership work and collaboration with stakeholders is central to the Programme. Non-enforcement stakeholders confirmed they wanted to input into the Programme. A necessary output was therefore an **effective feedback loop between stakeholders and WRC Coordinator to ensure the WRC Coordination Programme was informed by their engagement**. Various types of stakeholder engagement were noted, for example, attending Programme events, input into and use of the communication strategy, utilising and feeding into training and PGs, and data sharing.
- 3.57 The WRC Coordinator role was valued by participants for providing a single point of contact for expert advice and information on WRC to a range of stakeholders. Participants highlighted the importance of this output for **informing UK and Welsh Government policy and strategic groups**. The WRC Coordinator has, for example, provided expertise on policy and legislation to a UK Government Select Committee (e.g., the Kept Animals Bill, a proposal which aimed, amongst other

measures, to prevent dog attacks on livestock in England and Wales [The UK Government has since dropped the Bill]), which will subsequently impact prosecution and sentencing outcomes. For UK strategic groups, this could ensure the Welsh perspective is understood and embedded in policy developments.

- 3.58 For the WRC Coordination Programme to be successful, participants argued criminal justice agencies and other statutory partners need to prioritise WRC. This could be achieved by these **agencies aligning relevant parts of their internal strategies with the Wales WRC Strategy** to bring about a coordinated and consistent response across the sector. Two in three respondents to the Welsh Government Consultation (2023a) confirmed their organisation had WRC objectives (or a set problem-solving approach to WRC) embedded in their strategy or approach; indicating this crucial output is expanding to other stakeholders. The identification of this output was influenced, in particular, by the weak prosecution and sentencing of WRC noted by participants, which compromised the WRC response.

“Then we are talking about outcomes at court as well. A lot of these things will never ever get to court. Not in public interest et cetera” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

People and Partnerships

- 3.59 People and partnerships refer to outputs focused on collaboration and coordination with key stakeholders, which is central to WRC Coordination Programme outcomes. The Wales WRC Strategy (Welsh Government, 2023: 10) outlines **steps to achieving a more cohesive and coherent wildlife and rural crime enforcement response**. The Strategy proposes doing this through developing effective networks to share best practice and resources and information sharing among partners and enforcement agencies. This output refers to supporting both a coordinated enforcement approach across Wales and the UK more broadly, while also arguing for flexibility to respond to local problems and contexts (see also risks).
- 3.60 In recognition that the Programme cannot be delivered alone by the WRC Coordinator and enforcement agencies, participants highlighted the importance of a **coordinated stakeholder approach, including joint initiatives lead by statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to enhance collaboration**. The documents and participants clearly demonstrated the desire for, and value and benefits of

partnership work in achieving Programme outcomes. Failure to achieve this output would result in both stakeholder and enforcement efforts and resources being undermined:

“Trying to encourage people to record a crime of arson, I’m having to reopen crimes and send it back to them [the police], and they just don’t understand it at all, and the impact on communities, firefighters and these heritage and SSSI sites, it is just really a shame. It’s a shame. So, the bit with supporting stakeholders, that’s the first thing there, we feel a little bit unsupported at the moment” (Heritage group stakeholder).

3.61 The WRC Coordinator role holder reported engaging in stakeholder mapping during the pilot year of the Programme, which resulted in drawing together many and varied stakeholders across Wales. Nonetheless, participants acknowledged gaps existed that may impact on Strategy priorities:

“I think there’s a lot of the right people here [at the annual conference 2023], but there may well be some obvious gaps. Is there any representation from, for example, community councils? Because they will probably get to hear first-hand about the real issues and the challenges in their locality...So, there may well be gaps that already exist, and we might be missing out on some of the priorities in that way” (Farming Association stakeholder).

3.62 Many participants felt their level of participation was appropriate. However, some identified the need to engage their own organisation and other stakeholders further (e.g., Crown Prosecution Service, courts, fire and rescue, Local Authorities and environmental agencies and experts). The participation and collaboration of all CJS agencies was emphasised as vital to improving the effectiveness of the WRC response. Most stakeholders in the WG (2023) consultation recognised the role of the WRC Coordinator in facilitating better partnerships. This has included an innovative programme with the probation and parks service.

3.63 Central to the development of a collaborative approach is the output of **better informed and resourced stakeholder partnerships**. Better informed stakeholders could be achieved (and measured), in part, through an effective Programme communication strategy which targets all stakeholders (e.g., strategy, events, newsletters, conferences, pop-up awareness sessions, social media). Successful stakeholder partnerships increase efficiency by recognising who is best placed to

engage in an activity, while also facilitating cross-pollination of expertise and resources among multiple organisations.

- 3.64 The **development of six expert PGs** is evidenced in the documents analysed (Welsh Government, 2023 – see also Annex B). This development was viewed as an important output for Programme delivery by all participants. They also argued that this output should emphasise the **PGs must represent the diversity and expertise of stakeholders, meet regularly and, importantly, evidence the specified PG objectives are being achieved.**

Capacity and Resources

- 3.65 A key output relating to capacity and resources highlighted in the documents (Welsh Government, 2023) and by all participants is the **provision of appropriate support and resources for stakeholders to meet the WRC Coordination Programme goals.** Participants comments echoed the widely acknowledged under-resourcing of responses to WRC both in Wales and the UK more broadly (United Nations, 2021, see also risks). Participants identified the need for additional people, data and technological resources to achieve the Programme aims (see also Outcomes and Inputs section below). They noted the basic resources essential to enforcement (and provided for other officers) were often not available for WRC officers, preventing effective enforcement. Appropriate resources would include enough dedicated WRC Officers with access to reliable data and data analysts, and specialist resources (e.g., rural-terrain vehicles, freezers for preserving evidence) to carry out key enforcement roles. Non-enforcement stakeholders also required access to data and enforcement expertise. Appropriately resourced stakeholders can be achieved (and measured) through increased activities and outputs facilitated by access to shared resources (e.g., technology, data, intelligence, expertise).
- 3.66 Both the documents and participants recognised the difficulty in recruiting and retaining WRC Officers (see also risks). Two outputs addressed this concern. First, **WRC Officers' capacity would be enhanced by specialist training & resource sharing among enforcement agencies.** Second, **raising the profile of wildlife and rural crime amongst all levels of enforcement agencies** (from trainees, middle management to senior leaders), **would support recruitment and retention of wildlife and rural crime officers & personnel.** One participant highlighted the

extent of the problem that the Programme will need to take into account including the negative views experienced by officers:

“I think it’s almost to the extent in some forces, that if you go on to the rural crime team, that’s viewed as a bit of a joke...Is picking up dead birds real work?” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

3.67 Furthermore, they went on to suggest:

“Yes, it is but why would they understand it, because if you were to look at the demographics of police forces...The one specialist area that we don’t go out of our way to put into police forces is people from rural communities...in your outcomes it would be an interesting thing to actually positively promote the inclusion of people from rural communities in our forces” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

3.68 Another related output identified was **collaboration among all CJS agencies in working towards WRC Coordination Programme outcomes** to improve crime outcomes, such as legislative protection, enforcement, sentencing. Engagement from other parts of the CJS would provide officers with more successful outcomes to their work, thereby, increasing community confidence in enforcement response and wellbeing.

Data and Intelligence

3.69 Robust data and intelligence are central to enhanced capacity and resource outputs, such as raising the profile of WRC and appropriately resourcing stakeholders in their role. The prolific data limitations recognised in the literature was echoed by participants:

“The problems that different police forces have are well known probably to most around the table, in the data capture and the different systems involved. So for example, South Wales Police has Niche, it still has Niche. To search for a wildlife crime offence it has to be a keyword search because it’s not a notifiable crime so it’s very difficult to find ...There are problems with doing that and I’ve got to be brutally honest they’re quite insurmountable problems even for just four forces in Wales to bring that together. It’s a horrendous problem for England as well. I don’t know how to get around it” (Animal NGO stakeholder).

- 3.70 This issue points to the accessibility of WRC data for enforcement agencies. That is, even when the data are recorded on the police systems, many WRCs are not identifiable or are lost among high volume crime, due to not having an appropriate identifiable code and not being reportable or notifiable offences (which can be easily identified on the system). In response, the research identified that some police forces in Wales have developed their own bespoke database, best practice that could be adopted across Wales.
- 3.71 Thereby, a crucial measurable output would be **standardised wildlife and rural crime data collection and analysis across Welsh police forces**. In doing so an accurate baseline in WRC offences and impact can be established, which future Programme evaluation can use as a point of comparison for assessing project impact. This would also improve the enforcement response and evidence its effectiveness. This data, alongside robust **WRC Coordination Programme monitoring data**, is also required to evaluate Programme outcomes (see Evaluation and Data section below).
- 3.72 An overarching output proposed by participants was **data mapping of stakeholder, increased scholarly research and the development of a WRC Coordination Programme data collection strategy**. The Wales WRC Strategy consultation has initiated the data mapping process by asking participants if they hold data relating to WRC and if they would be willing to share this data. It was argued by participants that administrative data (e.g., recorded by statutory agencies) alone cannot capture the nature and prevalence of WRC or the effectiveness of responses. Non-enforcement and Welsh Government participants suggested stakeholder data and scholarly research have both been used effectively to inform existing WRC strategies.
- 3.73 Participants also recognised the above would require **enhanced and responsible data sharing**, which could be achieved through an MOU and/or ISA. These would define the scope and purpose of data sharing and mutually accepted expectations.

Activities

- 3.74 Activities are the actions taken and work performed to achieve set outputs and outcomes. The activities identified in the documents and discussed by participants related to the same four output categories: strategic implementation, people and

partnerships, capacity and resources and data and intelligence. Many of the activities identified are those that are already being undertaken as part of the Programme. Therefore, participant reflections comment both on work that is already being delivered and on activities still required. It was noted that the WRC Coordinator both coordinated and delivered diverse activities as part of the Programme, employing different and multifaceted channels and methods to produce the outputs. Questions posed by participants on the sustainability of this number and the type of activities is discussed in the Context section and discussed further below in Risks. Table 2 captures the range and scale of activities, the action, medium and agencies involved, and the target location, as detailed in the documents and by participants.

Table 2: Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordinator Activities

| What | How | Who | Where |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Actions include:</p> <p>Collaboration, coordination, leading, facilitating, educating, networking, mentoring, advising, informing, developing, improving, updating, establishing, awareness raising</p> | <p>Through mediums such as:</p> <p>Meetings, written strategy, strategic group membership, training, specialist enforcement operations, social media, media engagements, conferences, pop-up and other events, newsletters, reports (annual and other)</p> | <p>With:</p> <p>PDG/PGs, Government, policy makers, statutory bodies (e.g., Natural Resources Wales, NPCC), law enforcement officers, CJS agencies including probation, cadets, interest groups, NGOs, rural communities</p> | <p>In:</p> <p>Local, regional and nationally across Wales and the UK</p> |

Strategic Implementation

- 3.75 With the recent launch of the Wales WRC Strategy, participants reiterated that **the coordination and implementation of the Strategy** was a key activity for the WRC Coordinator. It was evident that one of the primary tasks undertaken by the Coordinator was the development and execution of an **All-Wales, comprehensive, coordinated approach to address wildlife and rural crime**:
- “The [WRC Coordinator] ... role is to coordinate activity between the four Welsh Police Forces, the Welsh Government, and Natural Resources Wales, statutory and voluntary organisations.” (Heddlu Dyfed Powys Police, 2021)
- 3.76 Further documentation (Welsh Government, 2023; Welsh Government, 2023a) identified that recent research into WRC in Wales and the NPCC strategy provided the **evidence underpinning the wildlife and rural crime priority areas** specifically defined for Wales. This evidence-gathering process played a crucial role in shaping the WRC Coordination Programme. Insights obtained from participants, however, indicated further evidence was required to justify this approach.
- “I would like to see how they [Programme PGs] were actually identified and what models were used to do it. Obviously within wildlife crime, we use certain models of identifying wildlife priority areas, and I’m just wondering how it was identified within Wales in relation to that?” (UK enforcement stakeholder)
- 3.77 Participants recognised the importance of establishing a **feedback loop** between the WRC Coordinator and stakeholders to **foster collaborative efforts with partners and stakeholders to inform WRC Coordination Programme developments**. This collaborative approach would ensure that the Programme is comprehensive, well-informed, and aligned with the priorities and needs of all involved parties. As part of this, WG participants highlighted that the WRC Coordinator maintained **regular meetings with colleagues from the Welsh Government**¹⁵. These meetings have informed Programme priorities, outputs, and outcomes through information sharing. They also formed an important part of the Programme governance structure and future ToC development and monitoring. The WRC Coordinator and Welsh Government worked together to align their efforts and ensure that Programme direction and goals are aligned with the broader objectives

¹⁵ At the time of reporting, these meetings have been taking place since the Coordination role commenced in 2021.

of the Welsh Government and UK responses to WRC. As argued by a Welsh Government stakeholder:

“It’s been important I think for [the WRC Coordinator] and for ourselves on the back of that, that he actually meets with us on a weekly basis, so he obviously catches up with what’s going on from a governmental sort of ministerial level and he then will update us on exactly what he’s been up to.”

People and Partnerships

- 3.78 The Programme has involved **close partnership with enforcement agencies as they actively collaborate to develop and implement a cohesive and coherent response to wildlife and rural crime** (Police collaboration board paper proposal for WRC Coordinator 2021). This collaboration aims to support aligned police strategies and actions to effectively address enforcement challenges. Best practice, such as adopting a 4P plan (prepare, prevent, pursue and protect), as set out in the Strategy, facilitates a coherent response.
- 3.79 WRC Coordinator activities have also involved **collaboration with key national wildlife and rural crime PGs and partners in Wales and the UK**. Both participants and documented sources observed that the WRC Coordinator takes an important and leading role in **facilitating discussions and monitoring the Wales WRC Strategy PGs**, to support these groups in **successfully working towards their key objectives** (Wales Rural and Wildlife Crime Coordinator, 2022). By closely tracking the progress of the Strategy, the Coordinator ensures that it remains aligned with the overall strategic direction and effectively contributes to the Programme objectives.
- 3.80 Participants highlighted that Programme activities primarily need to enhance coordination among the key stakeholders. The WRC Coordinator plays a pivotal role in this effort by **organising engagement events and facilitating processes that foster effective networking and communication among these stakeholders** (Heddlu Dyfed Powys Police, 2021). The Coordinator has also **raised awareness and provided educational support on wildlife and rural crime and the WRC Coordination Programme** through regular dissemination of information and engagement with these stakeholders. In doing this, the Coordinator has

increased understanding and knowledge of the importance of the Programme, and the issues related to WRC.

- 3.81 Moreover, it was acknowledged that the **WRC Coordinator was a valuable resource, providing a central point of contact and expertise for directing government officials, policy makers, CJS agencies and other stakeholders to expert knowledge and advice on matters related to wildlife and rural crime**. By providing these stakeholders with access to expertise, the Coordinator plays a crucial role in informing legislation and decision-making which shapes WRC responses beyond the Programme. Likewise, these activities can **raise awareness about wildlife and rural crime and its societal impact throughout the CJS**.
- 3.82 Furthermore, one notable activity carried out by the Programme was the **promotion of outputs and outcomes through a well-established media presence and communication strategy**. This approach aims to engage all stakeholders, including rural communities, by leveraging various communication channels. It was evident from participants, however, that the current communication approach should identify and focus on the most effective and desirable methods. The comments provided point to the need to optimise resources, especially the time of the Coordinator, by for example, developing a Programme communication strategy.

Capacity and Resources

- 3.83 It was noted, both in the documents and by participants, that the WRC Coordinator has been actively **developing and facilitating a comprehensive training package**, designed to address the essential and specific training needs of WRC Officers. This training package is tailored to meet the unique requirements and challenges facing rural enforcement:
- “[The WRC Coordinator is] the key coordinator between all of Wales Police forces, all the partner agencies. [He’s] involved in all the training, focus on all the training, [and applying] the training.” (Welsh Government stakeholder).
- 3.84 Importantly, the research stresses this training should not be for frontline officers alone, but also support staff. The Wales Rural and Wildlife Police Coordinator News – A Review of 2022 document, for example, proposed expanding training to all cadets and police rural teams including police control room staff across Wales. In addition to training, **the WRC Coordinator has developed mentoring**

opportunities for wildlife and rural crime enforcement officers. Recognising the value of mentorship in professional development, one Welsh Government stakeholder commented that the WRC Coordinator aimed to provide guidance, support, and knowledge-sharing platforms for these officers. These existing activities, present an opportunity in the Programme, for a more formal mentorship plan which is less reliant on the WRC Coordinator.

- 3.85 Lastly, the importance of equipping officers with the necessary tools was highlighted by participants. This has been facilitated by Programme activities that actively **promoted collaboration and access to shared resources within the wildlife and rural crime enforcement community.** This included **supporting intelligence and expertise sharing for targeted enforcement operations.**

Data and Intelligence

- 3.86 As mentioned earlier in this report, the WRC Coordinator has **conducted data and stakeholder mapping** (e.g., Welsh Government consultation, 2023a) to identify opportunities for data sharing and collaboration. Participants expressed a strong consensus on the importance of data sharing and indicated their willingness to contribute to this effort:

“NWCUC, they have the budget and the resources, the analysts to start looking at the data, but we want Wales to be part of that [data collection by feeding into] the PDGs... And at the moment what we see is [a WRC Coordinator] who’s so stretched that we need in Wales representation from all those groups from Raptors to Domestic Violence to be coming in on some of the PDGs and feeding in their data and then that data gets funnelled through to create that national picture. That’s where I see it going” (Animal NGO stakeholder).

- 3.87 This comment also points to the importance of sharing Programme activities across stakeholders, to ensure the WRC Coordinator role is focused on the most significant tasks. Although the recent data collected by the Welsh Government in the consultation (2023a) has not yet been operationalised, participants recognised gaps in stakeholder engagement, suggesting further mapping is required as part of Programme activities.

- 3.88 To facilitate the collection of monitoring data, to encourage and formalise partner agency data sharing, participants suggested **implementing MOUs and ISAs.**

- 3.89 Most pressing among participant responses was the **introduction of measures to enhance the accuracy of data recording, reporting, and sharing practices pertaining to wildlife and rural crime across Welsh police forces**. This action stemmed from the understanding that robust and reliable data are crucial for effective decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic planning in combating WRC. To achieve this, participants recognised the need for the Programme to actively **raise awareness among all relevant CJS and partner organisations** of the importance of accurate and accessible data in effectively addressing WRC.
- 3.90 Together, improved administrative CJS statistics, stakeholder data and **enhanced engagement with the scholarly and research community** was viewed as contributing to the **collection of reliable, timely and valid monitoring data necessary to effectively evaluate the Programme's** performance and outcomes.

Inputs

- 3.91 Inputs are the financial, human, and material resources committed to the Programme. This category represents both those inputs that are currently in place (see Figure 3 green text) and those identified as required (red text) for the Programme aims to be achieved. The impact of not providing these resources is discussed in the Risks section. The inputs highlighted in the documents and by participants are discussed in four categories similar to activities and outputs: strategic framework and structures, funding and resources, people and partnerships, data and intelligence.

Strategic Framework and Structures

- 3.92 Three **core strategies outlining the objectives, priorities, and action plans to combat wildlife and rural crime formed the foundation for the WRC Coordination Programme**. The NPCC Strategy 2022-25 and the NWCUC Strategic Assessment 2022 provided a framework for the Wales WRC Strategy, which helps deliver the Programme outcomes. Participants stressed that synergy between these strategies will help coordinate the response to WRC within and beyond Wales. The Wales WRC Strategy provides a vital focus for the Programme in order to target the most critical and pervasive issues in WRC. Although few participants commented specifically on the input of WRC legislation and policy, it was implied that these

strategies were necessary to effectively implement, and possibly inform, future legislation and policy.

- 3.93 Participants also placed strong emphasis on the importance of **establishing a robust Programme governance structure that situates the WRC Coordinator within the Welsh Government, alongside the Welsh four police forces and within the broader network of UK wildlife and rural crime enforcement agencies and priority groups**. It was argued that this arrangement would effectively communicate the necessary credibility, legitimacy, and authority of the WRC Coordinator, ensuring they were best positioned to deliver the WRC Coordination Programme outcomes.

People and Partnerships

- 3.94 It was evident that WRC Coordination Programme success is reliant on **recruiting an individual for the WRC Coordinator position with the appropriate seniority, expertise, experience, and network**. Participants argued that the selected candidate required these qualifications and skills to effectively drive the WRC Coordination Programme forward. This included a deep understanding of WRC issues, relevant experience in the field, and an established network of relevant stakeholders and organisations. Furthermore, as one participant highlighted, the role must have seniority:

“It’s got to be someone higher up the chain, with a little bit of clout within the police force. So, if the coordinators role is to try and influence senior management within the police service, then that’s one way forward” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

- 3.95 In this capacity, the WRC Coordinator input helps build closer stakeholder collaboration, bridge devolved (wildlife, animals, environment) and non-devolved (crime and CJS) areas of governance in Wales and prioritise Welsh rural communities in the CJS. The findings indicated that this has been achieved with the current role holder. However, the current grade allocated to the role does not reflect this level of expertise and experience. Consequently, concern was raised about the sustainability of the role, in terms of retention and future recruitment (see risks).
- 3.96 As collaboration and partnership is central to the WRC Coordination Programme, participants emphasised the crucial role **of key stakeholders with expertise in wildlife and rural crime to provide vital support, advocacy, and a diverse**

range of skills and resources to the WRC Coordination Programme (e.g., Welsh Government, PLU, police forces, WRC teams, NPCC, NWCU, NRW, NFU, interest groups, community groups, business groups, NGOs, media). Support from these stakeholders has, and can, take various forms, including sharing best practice, providing technical expertise, offering resources such as specialised equipment, and advocating for WRC responses. Stakeholder involvement has greatly enhanced the effectiveness and impact of the program, ensuring a collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach to combating WRC in Wales. This must also include harnessing collaboration with rural communities, who are habitat guardians and the victims and witnesses in WRC.

Funding and Resources

- 3.97 Financial and logistic resources emerge as a critical factor for the WRC Coordination Programme success. **The three years funding (2022 to 2025)** provided by the Welsh Government will be pivotal in developing the WRC Coordination Programme. Undoubtedly, financial resources are essential to the sustainability of both the WRC Coordinator role and the Programme. In order to engage effectively with stakeholders across Wales and the UK, participants recognised **the need for the WRC Coordinator to have decision-making autonomy and logistical flexibility**. This means granting the WRC Coordinator the authority to make independent decisions and take necessary actions to undertake the requirements of the role, including funding for **travel and subsistence**. Adequate funding and autonomy in these areas would enable the role holder to undertake essential field visits, attend meetings, and establish effective partnerships, ensuring comprehensive engagement and coordination in combating WRC.
- 3.98 Participants also highlighted the need to **enhance funding for personnel to provide necessary support to the WRC Coordinator**. This would enable them to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively in terms of information management, decision-making, and overall operational efficiency. As discussed above, participants argued that as the WRC Coordinator role had expanded alongside the Programme to an unsustainable breadth of activities and responsibilities, as indicated by this comment from a focus group attendee:

“[WRC Coordinator] will try and fill in, but it doesn’t work because he's too stretched” (Animal NGO stakeholder).

Consequently, participants proposed that an assistant could support the WRC Coordinator with various administrative and PG tasks. Furthermore, it was suggested the WRC Coordinator would need to delegate personnel to attend Wales and UK PG meetings (e.g., NWCUC, Regional Organised Crime Unit) and provide a feedback loop for the Programme.

3.99 Participants noted that additional **funding was required to support key personnel within the CJS who specialised in wildlife and rural crime**. For example, data analysts in enforcement agencies who could support comprehensive WRC data collection and analysis efforts, and dedicated personnel in the CPS and the courts. Allocating financial resources to provide training and enhance expertise and capacity in handling such cases, would contribute to more effective enforcement and outcomes, a crucial need identified by participants.

3.100 Funding requirements were also identified to support the other key Programme outputs and outcomes identified above. Such as, **the development and implementation of targeted engagement programmes, the establishment of robust intelligence networks, the provision of training for law enforcement personnel, and the promotion of public education and awareness campaigns**. Financial support would bolster the overall effectiveness of the Programme and assist in meeting the Wales WRC Strategy objectives.

Data and Intelligence

3.101 **The Welsh Government Consultation provides a valuable input to the Programme** as it captures stakeholders’ experiences in engaging with the WRC Coordination Programme. It also evidences the positive impact and effectiveness of the WRC Coordinator role, as of January 2023. As identified above, data availability and accessibility and intelligence generation were identified as a significant challenge in responding to WRC (see Context section for further discussion on barriers). Participants emphasised the need for **effective and consistent recording of wildlife and rural crime incidents across different police forces in Wales, enabling more comprehensive data collection and analysis:**

“Data is everything. It’s the foundation really where you base your decisions on and you allocate your resources. And I certainly think this Programme should have ... we need Wales to be involved in a drive at a UK level to make recordable, notifiable crimes” (Animal NGO stakeholder).

- 3.102 Additionally, participants stressed the necessity for a **dedicated wildlife and rural crime database that would enhance the analysis and intelligence capabilities on wildlife and rural crime**. This database would facilitate data and intelligence sharing among Welsh enforcement agencies, with national agencies (e.g., NWCUC), statutory partners (e.g., Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and other stakeholder (e.g., NGOs)). As one participant confirmed:

“none of us have systems unless we build our own which is kind of mandraulic, which is what we did in North Yorkshire. None of us have systems that can actually take it back to statistics ... Mapping and statistics, that’s where all of these decisions should be coming from” (UK enforcement stakeholder).

- 3.103 Ideally, all Welsh police forces would use a bespoke database to provide a regional and national picture of WRC in Wales:

“North Wales work off a system called ICAD where this works really well. South Wales have got STORM which is a different system. Dyfed Powys have got Niche and Gwent have got something else, so they’re all on different systems... if there was an equal system that they all worked on I could say right okay, let’s all put this into place and you know what? Within about half a day I could have it all in place” (WRC Coordinator role holder).

- 3.104 **Existing research provided by NGOs, businesses, scholars, and government bodies**, such as the UN Toolkit Assessment, are crucial to evidencing the prevalence, nature, and impact of WRC, and thereby, underpin the various Strategies. Some participants recognised the value of **further scholarly research to enhance understanding of the nature, prevalence, and effective responses to wildlife and rural crime**. Conducting research studies in this domain would support and enhance administrative data and contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies and interventions, providing valuable insights into addressing WRC more effectively.

- 3.105 This section has provided a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why the Programme desired change is expected to happen, by articulating the

change process required to achieve its outputs and outcomes. The following section considers the assumptions and risks to the ToC.

Assumptions

3.106 The research analysed documents and invited participants to comment on the theories and assumptions supporting views on how the WRC Coordination Programme functioned, and the strength of evidence supporting these assumptions. It is important to note that some of these assumptions reflect participants views and may not be compatible with the actual governance structure and powers in place. For example, the Programme relies on agencies which are not devolved and do not report to the Welsh Government, and so their involvement is voluntary. The key assumptions outlined are:

- rural communities, environments, animals, and biodiversity in Wales are under threat as a result of WRC,
- responding to WRC requires enhanced legal protection for human and nonhuman victims of crime and the environment,
- the problem of WRC is widespread and diverse, and presents unique challenges for the statutory agencies and stakeholders tasked with responding to it compared with other offence types,
- a coordinated enforcement approach across Wales would increase WRC detection and prevention, protect wildlife and rural communities, and enhance the overall enforcement response,
- the WRC Coordinator role is an important central point of contact and expertise, and facilitator for a coordinated response,
- stakeholders, including rural communities, must be part of the WRC response to affect change, stakeholders are willing to support this change,
- equal representation and engagement from all Welsh police forces will increase resources, expertise and understanding, capitalise on the limited resources available to respond to WRC, and limit crime displacement and the development of serious and organised offenders,

- increased data reliability, validity, accessibility, granularity, and sharing will result in a robust WRC Coordination Programme,
- current levels of prioritisation and funding to respond to WRC in statutory agencies do not reflect the robust enforcement response and outcomes, and confident and resilient WRC Officers required.

3.107 These assumptions require testing as part of the Programme evaluation.

Risks

3.108 In discussing the desired outcomes, outputs, activities, and inputs, participants stressed numerous risks to achieving these. The sustainability of the WRC Coordination Programme was a core concern and viewed by participants as dependent on the WRC Coordinator role, wildlife and rural crime enforcement personnel, stakeholder collaborations, and resource provision.

Risks related to reliance on the WRC Coordinator role-holder

3.109 As the Programme is **heavily reliant on the expertise and effectiveness of the WRC Coordinator role holder**, this was viewed as a particular vulnerability:

“the risk part of all of this is that it’s reliant on [the WRC Coordinator] and that’s the risk to the programme” (Welsh Government stakeholder).

3.110 Linked to this risk was the **WRC Coordinator role resources** (e.g., pay grade, financial autonomy, support staff) and the need to ensure future role holders were as knowledgeable, capable, and collaborative. As noted above in Activities, this would be impacted by the current pay grade, which was identified as lower than originally planned and than the equivalent position elsewhere in the UK (Welsh Government stakeholder). Furthermore, many participants believed the **WRC Coordinator was overstretched** (in activities and outputs), and as the Programme grows this would threaten delivery.

3.111 Similarly, participants feedback on the draft ToC cautioned **Programme overreach**: “It’s a strategy that wants to achieve everything in a three-year period when actually, most of what it tries to achieve, you would want to demonstrate over much longer time frame” (Farming Association stakeholder).

Risks related to limited resources

- 3.112 Consequently, **short-termism** relating to funding and political support was viewed as a risk to Programme sustainability. For example, participants acknowledged the support and investment of the current Minister, however they raised the concern that the forthcoming election cycles may change this. This would be particularly problematic if the Programme outcomes are not clearly evidenced.
- 3.113 The impact of **limited Programme resources**, either specifically funded by the Programme or by partner organisations, was also identified as posing a risk to delivery and sustainability. For example, the ToC highlights that the lack of support for WRC Officers and WRC Teams, in terms of receiving training and the resources to do their job, leads to high turnover of personnel, wasted resources, impact on the wellbeing of rural communities, limits outcomes for victims, and disengaged stakeholders.

Risks related to stakeholder engagement and partnership

- 3.114 The **competing needs and priorities of stakeholders** also raised concern amongst participants, as this may result in a diluted Programme focus and stakeholder disengagement. Multiple audiences with diverse needs and focus (which links back to issue of definition, focus and inclusivity) pose a risk to the Programme if not managed effectively. Essentially, the Programme cannot do everything for everyone, however, stakeholders must broadly see their organisation's needs represented in the Programme ToC.

“We can see that there are multiple audiences, and actually, the needs of those differ... right down to an individual farmer in Carmarthenshire, right up to strategic organisations we're talking about here (Welsh Government stakeholder).

- 3.115 **The lack of engagement in the Programme from key partners and stakeholders** would seriously impede the outcomes. Participation, among some key stakeholders, according to participants, may be limited due to WRC not being prioritised by agencies and organisations, limited resources, and lack of understanding on their role in responding to WRC.

- 3.116 As the response to WRC changes over time, so too will the stakeholders who need to be involved. Participants identified **gaps in the stakeholder mapping** and questioned **whether the ‘right’ stakeholders are engaged**:
- “Part of that [the ToC] is essentially stakeholder mapping. Who are you trying to talk to? Who are you trying to engage with? Which are the most important and why are you trying to engage with them, which goes back to honing this stuff down to be clear about the priorities and therefore having to accept that you can’t do everything” (Animal NGO stakeholder).
- 3.117 **The lack of partnership and collaboration within the CJS was viewed as challenging.** Those surveyed in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2022), for example, indicated 78 per cent of incidents did not result in convictions. The UN report (2021) refers to this as a poor conversion rate from reporting to sentencing with few reported cases leading to prosecution. In addition to the impact this has on victims, guardians and those responding to WRCs, prevention measures are severely limited without the certainty of punishment.
- 3.118 Many of the WRC Coordinator activities involve communicating with the various stakeholders, at all levels of organisations and government. An **inefficient communication strategy** would use valuable resources, may not access all stakeholders, create communication in silos and result in diluted messaging (when traveling bottom to top and vice versa). Linked to this, participants clearly highlighted that not **communicating Programme evidence effectively** may result in stakeholder disengagement, tokenism, and disharmony.

Risks related to data availability

- 3.119 Participants unanimously recognised the risk of **poor wildlife and rural crime baseline data, and data reliability, availability, consistency, accessibility, and analysis.** They identified that the Programme required clarity on the nature of WRCs and the knowledge gaps to support key activities, outputs, and outcomes. Lack of robust data will impact negatively on the enforcement response, stakeholder engagement and Programme monitoring of tangible/measurable impact. Linked to this is the risk associated with **monitoring the reliability and validity of available and future data**:

“But the bottom line is, and I put my hands up to this, the figures were being manipulated (police under-recording WRCs). So what it comes down to...is we need someone to look at this and give a true picture of what actually is” (Marine NGO stakeholder).

3.120 This point reflects the limitations in administrative data and the many variables that may impact apparent increases and decreases in official statistics. Participants cautioned careful interpretation of statistical data would be required to avoid damaging the Programme, as a successful response, for example, may initially increase recorded offences.

“Someone needs to take the stigma away, from that...a strategy that doesn’t penalise for honest reporting” (Farming Association stakeholder).

3.121 These comments also highlighted the importance of reinforcing official data with stakeholder and scholarly research.

3.122 In considering the risks to the ToC, the challenges of Programme evaluation and data were highlighted by participants. The following section discusses how ToC outcomes and outputs can be monitored, including considering relevant indicators and data sources.

Evaluation and Data

3.123 The ToC should be viewed as a working document, which requires reflection, updating, and monitoring. Evaluation is central to the ToC process. This requires measurement tools fit for purpose that will capture the desired Programme change. Participants were asked how they would like to monitor Programme outputs and outcomes, which identify various data sources that may provide some of the tools required. However, in mapping the existing data to the outputs and outcomes, few of these sources clearly examined the linkages and pathways between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, limiting the extent to which the ToC can be empirically measured using existing sources of data. Participants struggled to identify valid metrics and specific indicators (e.g., number or percent of officers trained, percent increase in reported WRC). They lacked confidence in the reliability and validity of this data, in particular the reliance on official statistical offence data and their interpretation:

“It’s a really fair point because no data point exists in isolation. You have to look at data in its entirety so that you can see the reflection of one against another when something is a co-variant...You cannot look at just one item and say, “We are doing well because of X.” It’s not... so you need somebody to interpret the data in a way that makes sense and that has to be done in quite a sophisticated way so you don’t get the wrong type of, I guess, outcomes in discussions” (Farming Association stakeholder).

- 3.124 Essentially, it is difficult to identify what causes changes in WRC data, due to the various factors influencing the outcomes. The quality of the evidence will determine the extent to which causality can be established between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Participants expressed concern that developing a ToC, and the associated indicators, may unhelpfully increase the burden on the Programme and Coordinator. The core challenges in monitoring the Programme outputs was evaluating what was realistically achievable in a three-year period, and the critical need for reliable baseline data upon which to judge future results.
- 3.125 In light of the data limitations highlighted in the findings, this section seeks to capitalise on existing data and measurement, and identify opportunities to enhance data collection. Analysis of the available data by the research team revealed it could provide a partial evidence base, which would require careful application to ensure validity and reliability. Table 3 provides an example of how the specific Outputs could be measured – including both the indicators and the data which could be used to measure them. The table clarifies where additional empirical data is required. Specific targets cannot be identified as a baseline is not accessible for most of the outputs. This could be developed as part of a Programme data monitoring strategy.

Table 3: Indicators and data for monitoring Outputs

| Outputs | Indicator | Data * further data required |
|---|--|---|
| Strategy launched to stakeholders, Programme outcomes understood by stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of stakeholders present at annual conference ➤ Number of stakeholders who have received/accessed the Strategy ➤ Feedback from stakeholders on Strategy and Programme ➤ Existence of communication channels/platforms for stakeholders to access Programme updates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conference attendance list ✓ Conference feedback form ✓ Online access metrics (e.g., number of website visits, social media interactions) ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| Programme informed by stakeholder engagement & feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number & range of communication actions (e.g., quarterly newsletters, annual reports, weekly social media post) ➤ Engagement with social media ➤ Number & type of responses to Consultation ➤ Number of meetings & stakeholders engaged in PG group engagement ➤ Feedback from stakeholders on Strategy & Programme, & feedback loop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coordinator record of communication actions ✓ Social media analysis (e.g., clicks) ✓ WG Consultation data ✓ Coordinator record of stakeholder database ✓ PG meetings & attendance list ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| WRC Coordination Programme advises key UK and WG policy and strategic groups, improving legislation, policy, prosecution, and sentencing outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of engagements & correspondence with UK and WG PDG/PG/Working Groups ➤ Number of times specialist advice provided to Government ➤ Better offence conversion rates & increased prosecutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WRC Coordinator record of engagements & correspondence with UK & WG policy & PGs ✓ CPS prosecution data* ✓ Enforcement data* ✓ Welsh Police Rural Supervisors PG |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Police areas deliver WRC offence data to NWCU | |
| A clear evidence base & measurement process to identify PGs and evaluation of progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risk/threat assessment detailing PGs ➤ Number of meetings & stakeholders engaged in PG group ➤ Objectives met by PG groups ➤ Stakeholder awareness & perceptions of PG progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WRC Coordinator data on PG areas ✓ PG meeting attendance & minutes ✓ WRC Coordinator record of PG evaluation* ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| Criminal justice and statutory partners in Wales recognise Wales WRC Strategy within their internal strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reference to Wales WRC Strategy in internal strategies ➤ Statutory partner engagement with WRC Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CJS and statutory partners' strategies & websites ✓ WRC Coordinator record of statutory partner engagement & correspondence* |
| A cohesive and coherent response to WRC among enforcement agencies, based on recognised best practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4P Plan in place across all Welsh PGs ➤ Cohesion, coherence, & best practice addressed in Welsh Police Rural Supervisors PG ➤ Operations tackling organised WRC ➤ Number of shared enforcement operations and intelligence ➤ Number of cross-enforcement agency best practice sharing events ➤ Officers report increased collaboration & better outcomes ➤ Stakeholders recognise increased cohesion & collaboration in enforcement approach & better WRC outcomes ➤ Regional comparison of recorded WRCs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Welsh Police Rural Supervisors meeting minutes ✓ PG group data* ✓ WRC officers survey* ✓ Stakeholder survey* ✓ Reported WRC administrative data |
| Coordinated stakeholder approach including joint initiatives led by statutory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of specialist operations, intelligence & data sharing among stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PG group data* ✓ WRC Coordinator record of MOUs/ISAs |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| and non-statutory stakeholders to enhance collaboration and WRC response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of MOUs & ISAs used ➤ Stakeholders recognise increased cohesion & collaboration, & better WRC outcomes ➤ Both statutory & non-statutory stakeholders lead PGs ➤ Attendance of statutory & non-statutory stakeholders at PG meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder survey* ✓ WRC Coordinator record of PGs ✓ PG attendance list |
| Expert PGs, based on Wales WRC Strategy priority areas, representing the diversity and expertise of stakeholders, which meet regularly and work towards achieving specified objectives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular PG meetings ➤ Attendance of statutory & non-statutory stakeholders at PG meetings ➤ Objectives met by PGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PG meeting record and attendance list ✓ WRC Coordinator record of PG evaluation* |
| Better informed & resourced stakeholder partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stakeholders report enhanced partnership work, information and resource sharing ➤ Number and type of bespoke training sessions provided or facilitated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder survey* ✓ WRC Coordinator records |
| Appropriate support and resources available for stakeholders to meet the Strategy goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better WRC outcomes [this may include offence increases or decreases] ➤ Enhanced WRC data availability & sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CJS administrative data ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| Enhanced capacity, specialist training & resource sharing among enforcement agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resources allocated to enforcement agencies, including technology (e.g., CSAS, DISC, LoRaWAN) ➤ Number of bespoke WRC training programmes offered, ratio of officers with WRC specialist training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wales Police Supervisors PG data* ✓ WRC Coordinator records ✓ Stakeholder survey* |

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|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of officers completing national training (e.g., NWCU) ➤ Level of collaboration & information sharing between enforcement agencies ➤ Number of collaborative initiatives (e.g., joint task force) ➤ Adoption of new technology to enhance data sharing (e.g., standardised WRC databases; communication platforms) | |
| The profile of WRC is raised among enforcement agencies, facilitating recruitment and retention of WRC officers & personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of WRC awareness raising engagements ➤ WRC training offered to enforcement agencies ➤ Increased recruitment & retention rates or ratio of WRC Officers retained to other officers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WRC Coordinator records ✓ Wales Police Supervisors PG data* ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| All CJS agencies are collaborating & working towards WRC Coordination Programme goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Level of collaboration and information sharing between enforcement agencies ➤ Number of collaborative initiatives (e.g., joint task forces, shared data) ➤ Number of personnel from different CJS agencies attending training programmes ➤ Availability of WRC data from each CJS agency ➤ Development and implementation of joint training programmes ➤ Adoption of new technology to enhance data sharing (e.g., standardised WRC databases; communication platforms) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WRC Coordinator records ✓ Wales Police Rural Supervisors PG data* ✓ Other PG data* ✓ List of attendees at training programmes ✓ CJS administrative offence & outcomes data ✓ CJS documentation on policy/strategies |
| A WRC Coordination Programme data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Data mapping database ➤ Data collection strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WRC Coordinator database* ✓ WRC Coordinator records |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| collection strategy informed by data mapping exercise & responsible data sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback from stakeholders on data sharing and accessibility | ✓ Stakeholder survey* |
| Standardised WRC data collection & analysis strategy across Welsh police areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Data collection and analysis strategy ➤ Use of standardised system/database ➤ Crime Survey for England & Wales ➤ National Rural Crime Survey [NRCN] ➤ Rural Crime Report [NFU mutual] | ✓ WRC Coordinator record on strategy development ✓ Annual wildlife and rural crime Report* |
| Robust Programme monitoring data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Data monitoring plan ➤ Data collection strategy ➤ Improved WRC data availability & accessibility | ✓ WRC Coordinator records ✓ PG data ✓ CJS administrative data |

3.127 The content analysis undertaken as part of this report identified many reports, communications, engagements, specialist operations, training figures, which could be used as part of an evidence base. For example, the WRC Coordinator annual report (2022) identified 40 WRC Officers received specialist training (with Gelli Aur College) while a Welsh Government participant reported a thousand officers over a six-month period were trained in responding to domestic abuse. However, further information and stakeholder engagement is required for this research to establish if this this is the ‘right’ amount and type of training to become an evaluation indicator.

3.128 Evidently, there is need to enhance data availability to support Programme evaluation. In the process of data mapping and developing a data plan to support both Programme outcomes and monitoring, opportunities may arise to link into existing or planned research and data collection activities (e.g., national surveys, public consultations, stakeholder data). In line with the UN Assessment (2021), the Programme should consider producing an annual WRC report similar to that produced in Scotland on wildlife crime, which collates CJS and reliable stakeholder data in one publication. This report could provide valuable analysis of patterns and trends in WRC data.

4. Conclusion

Research Context

- 4.1 To conclude, this report details the findings from research aiming to develop a comprehensive Theory of Change Logic Model that illustrates the anticipated inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordination Programme (WRC Coordination Programme). The model serves as a framework for understanding how the Programme operates and the expected impact on addressing wildlife and rural crime (WRC).
- 4.2 The Programme, as captured in the Wales WRC Strategy, aims to further develop an all-Wales coordinated and effective response to WRC, which is tailored to Wales' needs. This aim is supported by the WRC Coordinator role created by the Welsh Government in 2021 and extended to 2025. The Programme contributes to the broader aims of the Welsh Government and their ambitious legislative programme which helps protect rural communities, animals, and biodiversity.
- 4.3 Existing research justifies the need for this Programme by highlighting the many challenges and opportunities in responding to WRC in Wales. Governmental research, for example, emphasised the widescale and serious impacts these crimes have on communities, wildlife, other animals, and the environment. Other reports noted rising rates of WRC (after an initial decline during the Covid-19 pandemic), distrust in policing and heightened levels of fear of crime among rural communities. The literature also acknowledged the unique challenges of policing large rural areas and diverse WRCs, with limited resources, coordination, officer training and data, and many competing enforcement priorities. Most recently, the Welsh Government consultation evidenced the positive impact of the Coordinator role in responding to WRC.
- 4.4 The research acknowledges the Welsh Government cannot address these challenges alone. The Programme has developed around the Coordinator and the Strategy, but is reliant on voluntary engagement from key statutory agencies and stakeholders. To support Programme development, monitoring and evaluation, the need for a ToC was identified by the Welsh Government.
- 4.5 Theory of Change (ToC) frameworks are designed to be flexible and adaptable, and intended to be modified and reflected upon throughout their development and

implementation. The ToC is based on analysis of both existing documents and empirical data (three focus groups and one interview). Importantly, this evaluation has occurred early in the Programme's development, has been informed by key stakeholders and is actively supported by the Welsh Government's (WG) management and implementation team. When interpreting the research findings and implications it is important to consider the study limitations. Data collection, for example, coincided with launch of the Strategy and the move toward the conception of a 'Programme' of work, which confused some participants. While providing views from a range of stakeholders across sectors and regions, the fieldwork was unable to include all willing stakeholders.

Contextual factors identified within findings

- 4.6 Clarity on the WRC Coordination Programme focus and goals was central to both the context and barriers raised by participants. As demonstrated by the ToC, the Programme has rapidly grown into a comprehensive programme of work, which aims to provide an all-Wales focused and coordinated response. It primarily supports enforcement agencies and statutory partners in delivering an effective and sustainable response which protects and enhances habitats, wildlife, and rural communities. Participants added to this, emphasis on partners and stakeholders in delivering the Programme and the potential for broader impact on political, institutional and cultural change in attitudes and responses to WRC. While the scope of the Programme is shaped by the reach of the WG, it can nevertheless seek to engage a broad range of stakeholders and support these broader goals.
- 4.7 Participants agreed the broad scope of issues encapsulated in WRC was a challenge. In particular, the complexity to responding to such diverse harms, offences and victims, and coordinating the various stakeholders involved. The findings highlighted the successful engagement of a broad range of stakeholders. These stakeholders bring crucial expertise and resources, but also, diverse needs and expectations, which must be managed effectively to ensure collaboration. Participant stakeholders held different perspectives on the Strategy priority group (PG) areas and requested better communication on the rationale and risk assessment evidencing their selection. Some argued the lack of synergy between the Wales WRC Strategy and existing UK strategies and approaches created a barrier to robust enforcement. Others emphasised the need for flexibility, to tailor

the response to the needs of Welsh rural communities, enforcement areas and contexts.

4.8 The key limitations noted in existing research, were also identified by participants, including challenges to people and processes, and resources and data. Data limitations severely impact Programme outcomes and monitoring. While there are many factors contributing to poor WRC data and analysis, a legacy of minimising and disregarding WRC is evident across the CJS. The evidence indicates low levels of detection and reporting of WRC, alongside poor prosecution rates and sentencing outcomes. Lack of understanding on the extensive and serious harms caused by WRC and the importance of a robust data-driven and collaborative response is commonplace among stakeholders. This directly impacts those tasked with responding to WRC and has resulted in high turnover of WRC officers and limited resources.

Logic Model

4.9 The ToC identified long-term (three+ years) Programme outcomes with broad social, environmental and policy and practice impact. Importantly, these included reducing harm to, and increasing the wellbeing of rural communities, animals and wildlife. To achieve this, strong legislation, enforced across Wales by confident and resilient WRC officers and teams, coordinated with and supported by sustainable stakeholder partnerships was emphasised. Robust data and intelligence underpinned each of these outcomes.

4.10 The expected and desired short-term (one-three years) outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs were positioned around four key categories: strategic (direction/implementation/structures), people and partnerships, capacity and resources, and data and intelligence. There is a natural overlap between these categories, however, each is discussed in turn to clarify the findings.

4.11 Strategic outcomes were seen as essential for guiding the Programme and stakeholders. Key outcomes included:

- meeting Wales WRC Strategy aims and objectives,
- synergy with other relevant UK strategies,

- a flexible and evidence-based Programme, with informed and engaged stakeholders.

4.12 These would be achieved through key outputs including:

- stakeholders who are involved in feeding into the Programme, which informs policy and supports PGs on WRC,
- launching and clearly communicating the Wales WRC Strategy to stakeholders, including criminal justice and statutory agencies who recognise it within their internal strategies,
- a Strategy with evidenced priority areas. Evidence may include risk assessments and threat analysis adopted by other agencies.

4.13 These outputs are supported by three activities:

- WRC Coordination Programme and Wales WRC Strategy coordination and implementation,
- collating evidence to support Strategy threat assessment of priority areas,
- stakeholder feedback loop to inform Programme developments.

4.14 The existing inputs include three strategies and a Programme governance structure connecting the WRC Coordinator to the Welsh Government, police and wider UK and Welsh PG/PDGs.

4.15 People and partnerships refer to the key Programme aim of collaboration and cooperation across stakeholders. In the short-term, the outcomes involved:

- a harmonised approach to WRC enforcement across Wales,
- clear roles and responsibilities in delivering a coordinated approach,
- the prioritisation of WRC among key stakeholders,
- victims feeling understood and supported.

These outcomes were supported by outputs, including:

- a more cohesive and coherent enforcement response (supported by the 4P plan) coordinated across Welsh enforcement areas, and reinforced by stakeholder engagement,
- expert and effective PGs,

- better informed and resourced stakeholders.

Programme activities could deliver these outputs by:

- facilitating cohesion and collaboration among police areas, PGs, and stakeholders,
- enabling networking, engagement and communication opportunities between stakeholders,
- providing leadership.

Furthermore, stakeholders attending PGs and working towards their set objectives was a necessary activity to meet Programme outcomes. The key inputs supporting these outcomes, outputs and activities identified were the WRC Coordinator and expert and community stakeholders.

4.16 Capacity and Resources capture the Programme aim to support the WRC Coordinator, enforcement officers and stakeholders. The short-term outcomes included:

- officers and stakeholders with increased capacity and capability,
- confident, informed, and resilient WRC Officers.

To achieve this, outputs involved:

- appropriate support and resources made available to stakeholders,
- specialist training and resource sharing among WRC Officers,
- collaboration from criminal justice agencies (CJS),
- robust recruitment and retention of enforcement personnel.

These outputs require two specific activities:

- developing and facilitating WRC officer training,
- partnership work which supports resource sharing.

The activities are expected to be resourced by:

- existing funding for the Coordinator role,
- desired personnel support,
- funding to support the identified activities and outputs.

4.17 Data and intelligence refer to the evidence required to support all Programme outcomes and monitoring. In the short-term, this includes outcomes such as:

- accurate WRC baseline data,
- responsible data sharing between stakeholders,
- intelligence generation,
- broader administrative WRC data enhanced by scholarly and stakeholder data.

Three outputs facilitated these outcomes:

- a data collection strategy which included stakeholder and scholarly data,
- standardised enforcement WRC data collection and analysis,
- robust monitoring data.

To achieve this, key activities included:

- raising stakeholders' awareness of data limitations and opportunities,
- stakeholder and data mapping,
- facilitating better enforcement and monitoring data,
- utilising scholarly research.

The identified inputs to meet outcomes for data and intelligence were:

- the Wales WRC Strategy Consultation,
- stakeholder data and scholarly research,
- reliable and consistent recording and analysis of CJS data.

Assumptions

4.18 The context, barriers and Logic Model identified must be understood through the assumptions evident in documents and supporting participants' views on how the WRC Coordination Programme should function. It was assumed that WRC is harmful to rural communities, wildlife, other animals, and biodiversity, and is widespread and diverse with unique challenges for society and those responding to it. Consequently, it was understood that a robust response must include enhanced legal protection for victims, enforced through a coordinated and collaborative CJS

response, which engages key stakeholders. Given the complexity of responding to WRC and delivering a coordinated and inclusive response, a central point of contact - the WRC Coordinator - was considered crucial. Likewise, equal representation from all Welsh police areas was expected to capitalise on the limited resources available and reduce opportunities for offending. Stakeholders were believed to be willing partners and vital to an effective response. Yet, limitations in the prioritisation and funding needed to combat WRC within statutory agencies was assumed. A shift in attitude was assumed to support an effective response. Furthermore, it was believed that a robust response must be underpinned by robust administrative, stakeholder and research data and analysis, the availability and collation of which, is currently lacking.

Risks

- 4.19 Programme sustainability was seen to be affected by several risks, some require monitoring and others removal for outcomes to be achieved. The value of the WRC Coordinator was evidenced by the Programme's reliance on their contributions. Programme delivery is currently dependent on the Coordinator's ability to juggle various roles and responsibilities with limited resources. Similarly, the Programme is at risk of overstretching in its attempt to meet the competing needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders and the complexity of responding to WRC. Yet, without positive stakeholder engagement outcomes cannot be achieved. The research demonstrated that failure to communicate effectively with stakeholders may result in disengagement or tokenism, and would waste valuable opportunities and resources. Poor WRC data and analysis was considered to threaten all aspects of the Programme, including its sustainability which must be supported by reliable WRC and monitoring data.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 4.20 Current crime recording, reporting and analysis practices would struggle to support Programme goals and evidence impact effectively. Data challenges appear at every point in the ToC and, in one participant's view, are "insurmountable". The Programme is challenged by its broad scope (e.g., stakeholders, offences), limited data (e.g., reliability, granularity, accessibility) and participants reluctance to agree

on appropriate monitoring indicators. Analysis of available data indicates there are opportunities to provide a partial evidence base, however, this would require careful and considered application to ensure validity and reliability of evidence in line with Programme outcomes. Opportunities exist to create new data; the Scottish Annual Wildlife Crime Report demonstrates that reliable¹⁶ wildlife crime data collection is possible.

¹⁶ While there are acknowledged limitations and gaps in the data provided, a similar report would greatly improve statistical wildlife and rural crime data for Wales and could maximise stakeholder data

5. Recommendations

This section outlines the key report recommendations, based on the research findings discussed. This includes attention to the assumptions and risks identified, and the key categories identified in the Logic Model.

Strategic

1. The Welsh Government Wildlife and Rural Crime (WRC) Coordination Programme implementation team should revisit the ToC periodically with a Programme evaluation to:
 - a. identify further opportunities, barriers, and risks,
 - b. test the assumptions underpinning Programme development,
 - c. identify relevant updates to inputs, activities, and outcomes, aimed at avoiding WRC Coordinator and Programme overreach.
2. Clarify the scope and vision of the Programme and communicate this clearly to stakeholders, including consideration of geographical reach and collaboration, engaging all CJS agencies,
3. Provide further transparency to stakeholders on the evidence underpinning the risk measurement of priority areas.

People and Partnerships

1. Focus on stakeholders' inclusion to build the Programme. Their diverse input, feedback, interests, and concerns can lead to inclusive decision-making, insights into potential risks, opportunities, and potential challenges, and thus a higher likelihood of success for the Programme,
2. Identify how the Programme can help challenge institutional norms of deprioritising WRC and concurrently emphasise the importance of responding to WRC and promote enforcement roles,
3. Focus on collaboration across the CJS which supports the development of a robust WRC response among all agencies, and facilitates the periodic review of data and conversion rates,
4. Develop a communications strategy which ensures all relevant stakeholders and effective channels are identified and utilised to maximise resources. The

- strategy should include a plan for disseminating Programme data and outputs and identification of gaps and opportunities,
5. A stakeholder mapping exercise should be conducted by the WRC Coordinator and Welsh Government to identify gaps in stakeholder engagement with the Programme,
 6. Action the Wales Police Rural Supervisors PG to identify opportunities for standardising the enforcement response across Wales.

Funding and Resources

1. Allocate funding for resources supporting the WRC Coordinator role and Programme activities and outputs for the duration of the short-term outcomes, and plan for long-term Programme funding needs,
2. Undertake a review of the current WRC training model for Wales and cross-check with training provided by partner organisations (e.g., NWCU, NPCC) for synergy and duplication,
3. Establish a mentoring programme which includes senior officers supporting the WRC teams.

Data and Intelligence

1. Use the Programme to drive the initiative to make all WRCs recordable and notifiable offences, with discrete crime codes to aid data granularity and analysis,
2. Work with the four Welsh police areas to introduce measures to facilitate more accurate and consistent WRC recording, reporting, data sharing and analysis practices, including training for call handlers and operators and exploring the use of bespoke WRC databases.
3. A data mapping exercise should be conducted to identify existing and available relevant data, gaps in data and data availability, and opportunities for data sharing with stakeholders (this may, in part, be captured in the Strategy Consultation and could further be linked to the above stakeholder mapping exercise),
4. Design and develop a research and evaluation plan aiming to improve WRC data and analysis and Programme monitoring. This could include stakeholder

data mapping, a data management policy, data ownership and data quality management, a plan for future data collection and analysis, Programme monitoring indicators and data, and the architecture required to collate and analyse the data pertinent to WRC,

5. Implement MOUs and ISAs with stakeholders to encourage stakeholder data sharing and accessibility.

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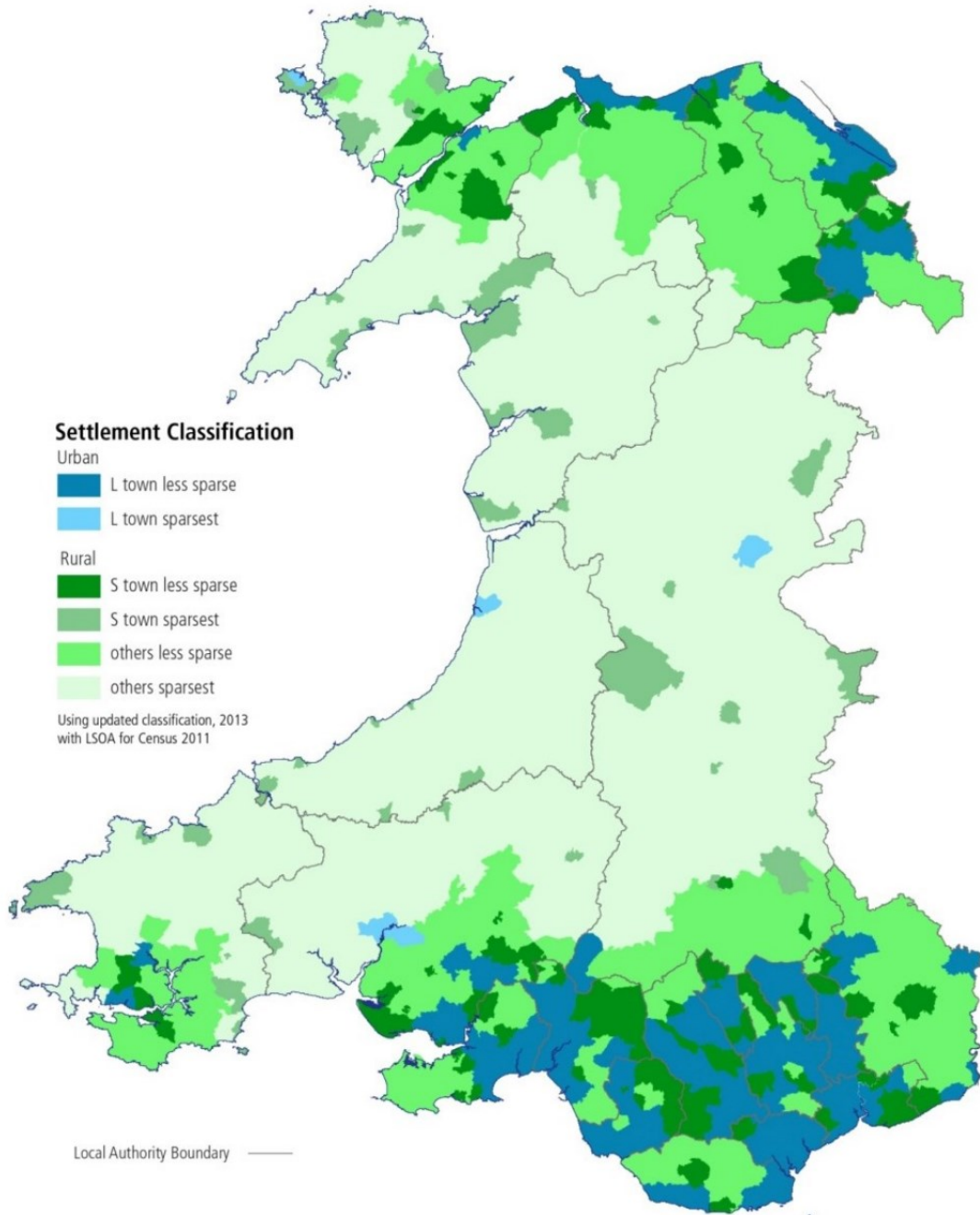
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Annex A

Map indicating Lower Layer Super Output Areas, highlighting rural areas in Wales (using ONS rural definition, 2013)¹⁷



¹⁷ [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2014 | GOV.WALES](#)

L refers to Large and S refers to Small.

Annex B

Comparison of Wales (WG, 2023) and UK (NPCC, 2022) Strategy Priority Groups

| Colour Key | |
|------------|--------------|
| Green: | Common areas |
| Blue: | Unique areas |

| | Welsh Government | UK NPCC | |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| | Wales WRC Strategy | NRCU | NWCU |
| Wildlife Crime Priorities | Mammals and European Protected Species ✓ Bat ✓ Deer ✓ Badger ✓ CITES ✓ European Protected Species ✓ Illegal Hunting | | CITES (Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species) |
| | | | Bat Crime |
| | | | Badger Crime |
| | | | Poaching |
| | Bird Crime ✓ All birds ✓ Coastal Mammals | | Bird of Prey Crime |
| | | | Freshwater Pearl Mussels |
| Rural Crime Priorities | Farm Crime | Farm Machinery, Plant & Vehicle Theft | |
| | | Fuel Theft | |
| | | Livestock Offences | |
| | | Equine Crime | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| | Habitats ✓ Fly Tipping | Fly Tipping | |
| | | Poaching | |
| | | Hare Coursing | |
| | Habitats ✓ Heritage Crime, ✓ Damage to Protected SSSI Areas ✓ Invasive Plants & Species ✓ Illegal Off-roading | | |
| | Mental Health & Domestic Abuse | | |
| | Wales Police Rural Supervisors | | |
| Cross-cutting Themes | | Serious & Organised crime | |
| | | Cyber-enabled wildlife crime | |