Documenting the ‘Rural Wraith’ Phenomenon

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Abstract

This article reports on a contemporary criminal phenomenon occurring in the UK which spans both urban and rural policing – namely the use of electronic scooters and motorcycles (often simply referred to as e-bikes) to commit crime. These are used by criminals who use them as a tool of criminality because of their enhanced mobility and their operational silence. Gangs of urban based criminals also referred to as ‘Rural Wraiths’ or ‘e-bandits’ use them to raid farms in the countryside to steal quad-bikes and GPS trackers from tractors amongst other items. This innovative criminal modus operandi is a particularly fit with the ecology agriculture in the UK in that many rural areas are within easy travelling distance for urban-based criminals. It is thus of limited utility in rural settings in Australia, the United States and Canada where geographic distances from urban areas are greater. The article introduces the phenomenon by discussing the urban based phenomenon before scoping and documenting the nature of the problem and providing examples of the so-called rural wraith activity in the countryside.

Keywords: e-bikes; e-bandits; rural crime; rural policing; rural wraith

Introduction

This article reports on a contemporary criminal phenomenon in the UK which spans both urban and rural policing – namely the use of electronic scooters and motorcycles to commit crime. In this article, the author makes reference to e-bikes, e-scooters, e-mopeds and e-motorcycles which are different styles of two wheeled electronic vehicles. In many respects, the use of the term e- bikes is problematic because they are not a single entity, and the term can cover electronic bikes (which look like cycles); electronic scooters (which look like children's platform style scooters); electronic mopeds and scooters (which look like their conventional counterparts); and electronic motorcycles (which look like normal motorcycles). The use of the collective term e-bike is justified because witnesses will invariably refer to them all as such. In this article, which reports on the criminal use of such vehicles as a tool of criminality because of their enhanced mobility, the author uses the term e-bikes to cover all types of two wheeled electronic vehicles.

From '*Documentary Research'* (Tight, 2019) conducted by the author, it is apparent that crimes utilizing e-bikes have been reported in Aberdeen, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Manchester and London to name but a few cities (See Smith and Coxhead, 2024).[1] In numerous cities in the UK the use of such vehicles is on the increase as documented in the press, but to date, little appears to have been done to assess, analyse or tackle the problems either from an academic perspective or from a practical policing or legislative perspective (Smith & Coxhead, 2024). In the UK, it is a very topical issue because in May and June 2023 in two separate incidents there have been three fatalities of youths using e-scooters in which there have been accusations that the youths were being pursued by police units (BBC news reports).[2] In both instances, the police forces involved have suffered public relations problems after initially denying that the police units were in pursuit of the youths. In both instances, the police have self-reported themselves to the Independent Office for Police Complaints [IOPC]. This article may also be of interest to scholars of rural policing and criminology in diverse locations where both urban and rural communities may be experiencing similar problems. The phenomenon is a relatively new one, hence the need to author this exploratory examination of the topic due to the dearth of published academic and professional articles available. This is important because traditional academic scoping strategies such as conducting literature reviews and case studies are not possible at this stage, making this article the only feasible methodology for documenting the topic.

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[1] The empirical evidence on which this article is based is drawn primarily from documentary evidence from local newspapers and websites in the aforesaid cities and also the farming press such as the *Farmers Weekly* and *The Scottish Farmer* and as such has not been subject to much academic scrutiny. An executive decision was made not utilise too much documentary sources in this article for the sake of readability.

[2] These emotive incidents involving the deaths of three teenagers Kyrees Sullivan, Saul Cookson and Harvey Evans have all died in e-bike collisions after being followed by police. See https://www.bbc.news.co.uk-news-uk-wales-66045016.

Importantly, the topic has two interlinked and related dimensions. Firstly, there is both a rural dimension and an urban dimension relating to 1) the rise of so-called "*Urban e-Bandits*" (Smith, 2023): and 2) the rise of the so-called "*Rural Wraith*" (NFU, 2022; NFU, 2023). This dual dimension has implications for rural policing in that its roots lie in urban criminology and policing methodologies and because of this, potential solutions and strategies to tackle the problem require a collaborative approach. Secondly, it is also a contemporary community policing; of policing highways and byways; health and safety concern as well as being a pernicious organized crime problem linked to 'County Lines' (Smith & Coxhead, 2024). The issue could be viewed through a number of lenses. Moreover, it is a policy and legislative issue too because the existing laws, rules and regulations in place do not provide a sufficiently robust framework. There are obviously overlapping aspects to this phenomenon of offending, but the central focus of this article is that of neighbourhood, or local, policing. It is first of all necessary to elaborate on the two terms introduced above to better understand them in context.

Figure 1

Map of United Kingdom

(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

The Urban e-Bandit phenomenon

This phenomenon has been developing since circa 2016, when e-bikes, e-scooters, e-mopeds and e-motorcycles became readily available to the public and concerns and complaints regarding public safety and the excessive nature of injuries to both riders and pedestrians began to be registered with the authorities (Smith, 2023). The term was coined by the author to cover the deliberate use of any two-wheeled electronic cycle in the commission of crime by organised crime groups and gangs in urban housing estates who flout the law and terrorize their local communities acting in an anti-social manner and thereby behaving like bandits. Fear of crime is also a concern too, with the wraith-like riders dressed in black, wearing balaclava or skeleton face masks. There are often sightings of two masked youths on each scooter and sometimes up to ten scooters in a pack circling an area in a show of strength. The e-Bandits operate via a modus operandi of instilling fear to ensure silence (Smith and Coxhead, 2024; BBC news report).[3] They are quite an intimidating sight and although they may not be all related to the same organised crime group, or crime family, they purposefully give the appearance of all belonging to the same crime group and purposefully flaunt their immunity from identification or prosecution.

The rationale for the use of the sociological term bandit is appropriate because it concerns self-identified outlaws who belong to a gang and typically operate in an isolated, or lawless area (Hobsbawm, 1981; Smith, 2023). The term e-Bandits is a contentious one because not everyone who rides an e-bike illegally is aligned to the criminal fraternity. From documentary research conducted by the author it is evident that the phenomena have reached the proportions of being an epidemic of anonymous and pernicious law-breaking which takes place in plain sight.[4] There is a dilemma in that the police are simultaneously open to criticism from law abiding citizens for ignoring and failing to tackle the problem professionally and from the families and communities of youths who become victims of police pursuits. This phenomenon is often also linked to reports of anti-social behaviour and fuels the fear of crime (Smith, 2023; Smith & Coxhead, 2024). In the former case the public blames the police for ignoring the problem and for allowing the criminals to openly flout the law with relative impunity. Quite often the offenders are young males from underprivileged backgrounds but the criminals behind the masks may be older men too.

The Wraith Phenomenon

The term ‘Rural Wraith’ was coined by the National Farmers Union [NFU] to label predominantly urban thieves who use e-bikes in the commission of theft from farms. Scholars of Scottish history and mythology and avid readers of J.R.R Tolkien’s ‘Lord of the Rings’ will be

[3] For an example of e-bandits goading the police in Bristol see the BBC news report – https://www.bbc.news.uk-uk-england-bristol-67380021

[4] The documentary evidence for this statement is self-evident from reading newspaper, media and social media accounts from all the aforementioned cities.

well aware of the '*Wraith'* phenomenon. The term is a Scottish word for 'ghost' and/or ghostly, silent apparitions. Tolkien's wraiths are more sinister specters, appearing as otherworldly, dark clad horsemen akin to the biblical horseman of the apocalypse but were 'faceless' which is appropriate in relation to this piece because the urban thieves who are targeting farm in the UK are also faceless and unseen because they arrive silently on e-bikes, unseen and steal with impunity slipping away from the scene often unseen and unheard. Typically, the presence of wraiths is only later discovered on CCTV footage. The Wraiths target GPS systems and other small portable items such as power tools. Alternatively, the pillion passenger (i.e., rider on the back seat, see illustration below) will steal and ride away a quad bike or a tractor or other high value vehicle such as a land Rover.

The remainder of this article is dedicated to scoping the nature of the problem, identifying common themes and concerns and suggesting viable strategies and tactics for tackling the phenomenon.

Scoping and documenting the nature of the problem

This article focuses on three main issues – namely 1) the criminal use of two wheeled vehicles - particularly e-scooters; 2) Particularly their use in committing farm crime; and 3) miscellaneous policing factors relating to the above.

The criminal use of two-wheeled vehicles

In recent years, in the UK, there has been an inexorable rise in the number of reported crimes in which motorcycles, mopeds, scooters and e-scooters feature as part of the modus operandi of the offender (Smith, 2023; Smith and Coxhead, 2024). It must be stressed that this is a particularly UK based phenomenon because of the geography of the urban rural divide and that many rural areas in the UK are within easy travelling distance of urban areas. This would not occur in Australia where the distances involved and road quality would make it a non-viable criminal modus operandi. Moreover, the range of a standard electronic motor cycle is anything between 40 miles and 120 miles before the battery requires recharging, which limits their range somewhat (Quora.com).[5] Nevertheless, this is not an entirely new criminal tactic or phenomenon because criminals are known for their use of innovation and innovative practices in the pursuit of their aims (Hyder, 1999). The use of motorcycles of any type as a tool of criminality because of their maneuverability and their mobility, which enhances their chances of outrunning the police in a pursuit (Williams, 2013; Clarkson, 2019).[6] Trail bikes used to be a

[5] See https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-top-speed-and-range-of-an-electric-motorbike for a discussion of battery life and range.

[6] Williams examined the use of motorcycles by Dublin criminal Martin Cahill, where cycles were used for robberies because they could outrun the police in any subsequent pursuit but would seldom be done openly to minimise awareness of what was organised crime. Similarly, Clarkson (2019) has raised awareness of organised crime gangs utilizing motorcycles, trails bikes, mopeds, scooters, and e-scooters to commit street robberies, where part of the

favored vehicle of thieves because it allowed them to operate 'off-road'. Yet, their *Achilles heel* was the distinctive noise their engines made, making them trackable. The noise factor also made it possible to sometimes predict the course of travel and to arrange for policing intervention tactics. This is no longer the case with the ubiquitous e-bike of whatever description. It is common practice for criminals to wear balaclava masks, rather than crash helmets, as this allows any approaching vehicles to be heard more clearly, thereby enabling evasive action against policing tactics including surveillance operations, the deployment of trained police riders on trail bikes and stingers (Smith and Coxhead, 2024). Nevertheless, the introduction of e-bikes has elevated this existing problem to a new level because of their silence and because non-registration makes them virtually untraceable. This makes interdicting offenders in the act of riding problematic. Some forces in England, including the Metropolitan Police permit so-called 'tactical nudging' which basically entails knocking riders off their motorcycles, whilst others like Police Scotland adopt a no pursuit policy in relation to safety concerns.

In a rural context, Bunei (2017: Keynote address) reports that in parts of Africa, but particularly in Kenya, opportunistic criminals are using motorcycles to travel to rural areas to steal sheep, or goats, which are tethered across the petrol tank and carried back to cities for resale. There is also apparently a serious problem in China with the use of motorcycles by criminal gangs in the Pearl River Delta region (see Xu, 2014) where motorcycle bans have been introduced and over a five year period up to 230,000 motorcycles and electric-bicycles were destroyed in an attempt to tackle the problem.

Farm Crime and the urban offender

In the UK, as in other parts of the world, rural crime and in particular farm crime is a pernicious problem which increases year upon year due to a variety of factors, including post austerity cuts in policing budgets, the closure of rural police stations (See Smith and Somerville, 2013) not to mention inflation, Brexit and the pandemic (NFU, 2022/2023). Traditionally, responsibility for much rural crime has been blamed on the so-called '*urban marauders'* (Hogg and Brown, 1998; Hobbs, 2001; Smith, 2010) who target the rural areas because they are less policed and protected than urban targets. However, the '*Rural Wraith'* phenomenon which is its latest manifestation is even more problematic for farmers and police tasked with investigating their crimes because there is no less likelihood of detecting the offenders unless they are arrested in the commission of their crimes. Such crimes have been reported in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire counties in east and central England, and Cheshire County in west and central England, but are committed on a UK wide basis. As stated above, the thieves target expensive GPS systems, Quad bikes, ATVs, and expensive power tools. The overall rural crime spree was valued at £2.9 million per annum in 2021 (NFU Mutual Report, 2022).Their use of e-bikes or

organised planning involves training criminal riders on using preferred routes to minimise opportunities for police units to follow them.

scooters, which are silent, makes them difficult to detect as does the fact that they do not have to be registered and thus bear no number plates.

In addition, the riders are invariably all dressed in black with ski masks or face coverings. Alternatively, they dress in military style camouflage jackets to blend in with rural scenery (see the image below).[7]

Source: Author Generated

As can be seen by the image shown above there are very little identifying features for a witness or investigator to recount or focus upon, but witnesses are left with no doubt about the nefarious intent behind such the use of such attire. The existence of the so-called rural wraiths has come to light primarily from witnesses to crimes and from CCTV cameras at the locus of some of the rural crimes. As a successful criminal modus operandi, it is likely to be repeated and continue into the future.

Miscellaneous policing factors to be taken into consideration:

Although there is no breakdown in the number of crimes and offences reported involving e-bikes, either in urban or rural settings, it is an emerging modus operandi because of the silence and maneuverability of the scooters and because the criminals (wraiths) can easily evade pursuing police vehicles by going off-road and up narrow lanes and footpaths. Most police forces in the UK have a no-pursuit policy regarding chasing motorcyclists, although there may be the contingency in some forces of adopting the 'tactical nudge' strategy of knocking them off their moving vehicle which could prove injurious to them.

[7] Drawn by Lauren Fearn and copyright given to author. There are no copyright issues.

From a perusal of the documentary research available, there appears to be two main types of offender profiles identifiable (See Smith, 2023). The most problematic is the first, which consists of criminals often belonging to known Organised Crime Groups [OCGs] who use the e-bikes to further their criminal enterprises whether they be drug dealing or theft. These are the most difficult to deal with because they are often disqualified drivers or wanted 'on warrant' and will therefore take every opportunity to evade arrest, and riding recklessly to escape. The first type are more likely to wear balaclava masks to hide their identity. In the OCG scenario the e-bikes are likely to be gang property and most likely obtained by theft. There are several recorded instances of gangs breaking into shops to steal e-bikes. An OCG may use many different types of e-bikes from the smaller for runners to e-motorcycles for gang members. The criminal gangs are using e-bikes on a daily basis and are likely to be very proficient in their usage.

The second type of offender is youths who may or may not be affiliated with any gang and often use e-bikes infrequently and because they are fun. This category of offender may not be so experienced as riders and often ride whilst making no attempt to hide their identity. The problem is that when an officer encounters such youths, they are initially often unaware which category of offender they are seeking to stop. This type of offender is more likely to stop for police when requested. However, some may also panic and also ride recklessly and furiously to evade capture.

One of the main issues is that e-scooters are currently legal to purchase, but in the UK and in Scotland they are defined as powered transporters or Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV) meaning they attract regulations around MOT (i.e., Ministry of Transport), tax and licensing. It is therefore illegal to ride them on a public road (unless as part of the government backed rental scheme).[8] It is illegal to use them on a public road without insurance and since private insurance is not possible for such a device, anyone using one could have the vehicle seized under the Road Traffic Act; or under Section 59 of the Police Act if used in an antisocial manner (Smith, 2023).

The laws, rules and regulations covering the use of e-bikes are a complex and changing area. The sale of e-bikes is a rapidly growing market with complex corresponding legal requirements. Indeed, the ubiquitous invisibility of the e-bike or e-scooter is one of its appeals to criminals. They come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes making discernable identification of them highly problematic, and very difficult to trace. It is doubtful whether witnesses, or many police professionals, could identify the makes of such vehicles. With traditional motorcycles, witnesses have a make, model, color and number plate to assist them in identifying offenders. This is not the case in crimes involving e-bikes because the brand names are not yet easily recognizable in the public consciousness. Most look-like motorcycles minus the engines and fuel tank. If they are stolen, they will invariably be painted black to hide their original paint scheme,

[8] One cannot rent an e scooter if underage or without an appropriate driving licence.

again frustrating attempts at identifying offenders. Witnesses can only report seeing masked offenders on e-bikes.

There are three main types of e-bikes on the market: motorcycles, scooters and mopeds. Electric motorbikes or mopeds are categorized - those capable of 15.5mph or less; those capable of 28pm, or less; and those that can travel faster than 28 mph. These are then linked to restrictions over ages for driving licence purposes (for example an A2 licence is required for a bike up to 35kw, for those aged 19 and over). E-bikes are similar to a conventional bicycle, being legal to ride for those aged 14 or over so long as it has pedals but its 250W power will not permit riders to exceed 15.5mph. The law changes for a faster bike, which can travel faster than 28 mph, meaning it takes that specification about restrictions onto a par with a moped (Smith, 2023). One particular make of e-scooter can reach speeds of up to 70 mph. The limited distance of e-motorcycles does impact their use in rural areas as they require to be re-charged regularly.

It is the speed of such bikes which causes so much concern both from a road safety and health and safety perspectives because of the already recorded potential for serious injury and even fatalities for those using such transport. One of the main issues is that the internal injuries caused from crashes or falls from e-bikes are far more serious than those incurred in other types of road traffic accidents. This results from a combination of excessive speed and the lack of protective headgear and clothing. This makes any form of confrontation or pursuit inherently dangerous and potentially fatal.

Moreover, there are very few possibilities of stopping an offender who chooses not to stop for the police when lawfully requested to do so. Police in Manchester recently used a 'Stinger' apparatus to puncture the tyres to stop the vehicle and enable the rider to be arrested. Whilst this is heartening from a law enforcement perspective, it is not always feasible, nor advisable, for officers to deploy such apparatus safely. Indeed, as a consequence of the dangers of stopping offenders, police scientists are trying to develop technology to stop e-vehicles remotely by jamming their electronics.[9] However, until this technology is developed, tested and licensed for use in the public domain, it is incumbent upon the police to develop strategies and tactics for dealing with the phenomenon in both urban and rural settings. In the next section some potential strategies and tactics to aid in interdicting criminals using e-bikes are mooted and discussed. The Police Federation of England and Wales acknowledge that there is a considerable challenge in policing the criminal use of electronic motor cycles (Police Federation Report).[10] A major problem is the current lack of legislation and individual police forces are left to interpret the rules themselves and develop their own strategies, tactics and responses. For example, there are extensive guidelines around the rules of engagement in police pursuits, but police officers do

[9] See https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12132419/Police-scientists-developing-technology-stop-suspect-e-vehicles-remotely.html

[10] See https://www.polfed.org/news/latest-news/2023/the-challenge-of-policing-e-bikes/

not receive training on how to pursue e-bikes. When police begin following e-bike offenders the situation can rapidly deteriorate into a pursuit situation before there is time for the rules of engagement for police pursuits to be put in place. Indeed, e-bikes are not included in the College of Policing guidelines for police pursuits. It may be a matter of semantics, but does following an e-bike constitute a pursuit? This is an area of policing tactics which needs to be urgently addressed. In many urban settings there is an acknowledged shortage of officers and officers may not have time to routinely devote to low level policing issues such as the criminal use of e-bikes.

Developing strategies and tactics for redressing the imbalance

One of the main problems in redressing the imbalance in relation to the so-called 'wraiths' is that although the targets are located in rural areas it is primarily an urban crime phenomenon and as a result it would require collaboration between rural and urban policing units and commands because the majority of the Organized Crime Groups [OCGs] who are behind the criminal activities operate out of so-called 'Criminal Areas' (Morris, 1957/2013) where they can operate with relative impunity (Smith, 2023). To tackle the phenomenon professionally, it will be necessary to adopt a collaborative community policing approach to enforce the problem at its roots. The 'wraiths' are most vulnerable when exiting and entering their urban environments because of the heightened policing presence and surveillance apparatus.

Rural Solutions

In rural areas, the police have a lower presence per capita of the population and there is a lack of technical surveillance capabilities. It is possible to cross various county boundaries without encountering a police patrol, particularly at night. Nevertheless, there are some exciting potential solutions:

- In Shropshire [West Mercia], the police are adopting a proactive 'Seize-and-Destroy' policy in relation to e-bikes used in criminal activity and are also piloting the use of SmartWater to tag property to curb the rural crime wave they are currently experiencing.[11] This is an exciting innovative combination and could be extended to include the possibility of tagging the so-called wraiths using SmartWater fired from a paintball gun or an aerosol spray to aid possible identification.[12] Nevertheless, this is a contentious issue because when confronting an offender on a fast moving e-bike in this

[11] See https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/local-hubs/shrewsbury/2023/02/21/police-step-up-seize-and-destroy-warnings-in-shropshire-over-use-of-e-scooters/ andhttps://www.shropshirestar.com/news/crime/2022/08/02/rural-crime-costs-shropshire-nearly-1m-a-year/

[12] SmartWater is a proprietary brand name for a chemical marking agent with a unique identifier which clings to the bodies and clothing of offenders who come into contact with it at a crime scene. Whilst this seems to be a valuable policing tactic it entails the police getting close to the wraiths when they are in the act of committing a crime which is no easy task given that police coverage in rural areas in the UK is rapidly diminishing.

manner it may cause health and safety issues leading to a crash. Whilst these may be controversial suggestions, they are certainly feasible.

- There is also scope for individual farmers, farm watch schemes and rural volunteers to collaborate with local community policing units to tackle the menace by creating a matrix of surveillance cameras on key roads and also to obtain and train volunteers in the use of farm drones. These could be financed by rural business owners or by crowdfunding. In addition, there is scope for an enhanced network of farmers and police to communicate via WhatsApp messages. This would enable sightings in real time to be acted upon proactively. There is also scope for farmers or rural businesses to set up a farm security company to share the drone technology with farmers via affordable rental packages and to train others in their use. Drones should be a standard farming tool in the future.

- Furthermore, there is scope for setting up a private investigation firm to provide rural surveillance capabilities including the use of CROPS officers to assist farmers gather evidence against persistent gangs of wraiths and to develop intelligence packages to hand to the police for further investigation and interdiction.

Urban Solutions

In the urban settings, there are also a number of exciting potential solutions available which are worthy of exploration:

- The seize-and-destroy tactic has also been used to good effect, but this has mainly been in relation to stopping and seizing the use of e-bikes of law abiding owners who are stopped at the request of the police. Consequentially, the police must invest in furnishing policing units with their own e-scooters and e-motorcycles to enable them to follow and interdict the wraiths when engaged in their rural marauding activities.

- The search-and- seize strategy has great potential if used as a tool in intelligence led policing. There is scope for developing intelligence packages on suspected criminals using e-bikes. Thus, when engaged in executing search warrants for other crimes if an officer locates evidence of the criminal use of e-bikes and evidence permits they should photograph the e-bike for future reference and seize it for destruction if evidence of legitimate ownership is not forthcoming. In addition, police should check that the e-bike has not been stolen.

- This would entail ensuring up-to-date lists of stolen e-bikes on a national basis.

- The police should seek out and locate evidence from street and other CCTV sites and appeal for dash-cam and mobile phone footage of incidents recorded by the public in an

attempt to identify offenders. This would bolster the public perception of the police with a an increasingly disaffected public.

- There is an urgent need to create a register of makes and models of e-bikes to assist police and witnesses in identifying what type and make of e-bike was involved in their crime. This would be a time intensive desk-based research activity and could be a commissioned report.

- There is also scope for using existing Anti-Social Behaviour legislation such as ASBOs and ABCs combined with Problem Orientated Policing [POP] initiatives to target individual criminals and criminal gangs using e-bikes. An ASBO requires court authorization whereas an ABC is a voluntary arrangement.

- This approach would entail operating a collaborative community policing approach involving local council departments and community organisations perhaps utilising the Prevent First crime prevention strategy (Smith et al, 2017) to coordinate the cooperative approach because although such criminals may feel safe in their criminal areas, they are vulnerable when operating in other areas.

Drawing tentative conclusions

This article has highlighted the scale of the problem in the UK particularly in relation to their use as a tool of criminality and it is obviously shaped by spatiality and the proximity of urban OCGs in relation to rural and farm areas which can be accessed readily from main roads. The above solutions are all feasible examples of entrepreneurial and innovative policing (Smith, 2021) which could make a difference in turning the near inexorable tide which is the rural crime wave. Whilst urban policing problems and dilemmas may be of little concern to farmers being targeted by so-called 'Wraiths' the solution to the problem requires a joint approach and the speedy introduction of new legislation to make the usage of e-bikes safer. This article provides valuable insights into a novel and unstudied issue, describing the problem in detail by unpacking differences in how it occurs in rural and urban environments and consider solutions to this but in particular offers practical implications for policing and prevention.

The article also documents, highlights and unpacks some of the comparative nuances of the phenomenon and demonstrates how it is shaped by geographic and social spatiality (particularly the rural vs. urban divides). It illustrates how the urban origins of the crime wave influence the modus operandi in real time and how this in turn drives the rural impacts. The large number of separate police force areas means that in policing terms cross-county cooperation is not guaranteed and that the rural wraiths may emanate from an urban conurbation in another force area and thus be unknown to the local police in the area the thefts occurred. This article presents some of the policing challenges in terms of poor legislation, poor and disjointed strategies and tactics and the difficulties in identifying such wraiths, let alone stop them and

secure a prosecution against them. The disjointed intelligence gathering apparatus does not help either. In addition rural crime is not typically considered serious crime and is thus typically under resourced. These organizational failings impact on community wellbeing and trust in the police. Very few farm thefts are ever detected and this can lead to a loss of faith in the police and the failure to report future crimes, leading to an increased perception of and actual fear of crime. In some cases it could lead to vigilantism. From an urban perspective when police action leads to the injury or death of a young criminal on an e-bike then it can lead to serious riots and community tensions. In addition as technology gathers pace and battery life is extended the possibility of such vehicles being able to travel farther will increase their criminal utility making the modus operandi viable in other wider rural areas.

This article is part of an ongoing research stream and the author would like to hear from other interested parties who are also experiencing similar policing problems. The ongoing research stream will focus on creating solution based case studies relating to the aforementioned cities which can form the basis of training notes for other officers who encounter the problems. Electric motorcycles are a type of transportation technology that can be used to commit crimes against farm operations, and the technology not only provides a means to increase security but also creates more vulnerabilities. Indeed, this case-based contribution provides some unique insights and thus has the potential to make a larger contribution to rural criminology.

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[13] *Police Professional* is a magazine that requires a subscription fee before access to its articles is possible. However, with the approval of *Police Professional*, a copy of "The rise of the urban e bandit" can be obtained upon request from the author at r.smith-a@hotmail.com.

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