

Agenda Item	3
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## Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee Report

**19 February 2024**

Reporting Period - 01 April 2023 – 31 December 2023



Report by  
Chief Inspector Stuart Fitzpatrick  
Area Commander – North Highland Area Command

Communities, People and Partnerships... at the Heart of the Highlands

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**Contents**

Introduction by Area Commander ..... 2

Local Policing Priorities ..... 0

Road Safety and Road Crime ..... 1

Anti-Social Behaviour, Disorder and Violence (including Alcohol and Drug misuse).. 2

Acquisitive Crime..... 3

Protecting Vulnerable People..... 4

Serious and Organised Crime ..... 5

Counter Terrorism ..... 6

Crime Statistics ..... 7

## Introduction by Area Commander

Chief Inspector Stuart Fitzpatrick

I present to you the North Highland Scrutiny Report covering the reporting period 1 April 2023 until the 30 December 2023.

Previously reports were provided to each individual committee, but due to restructuring of our resources to maximise front line policing, we have reduced the number of reports we are providing. The report will now be at Area Command level, but delivered to you at local committee level. I can give you my assurance that although the report will cover a slightly wider geographical area, I will be able to provide any additional local context.

The interpretation of statistics continues to be a key part of what we do, identifying potential crime trends and ensuring I have the right officers in the right place to keep our communities safe. We do compare data on previous years, and we are slowly coming back to pre-COVID demand. I am always happy to discuss the data and provide some context around the statistics provided within the report.

We are now, following the COVID challenges, facing some real cost of living challenges which will impact all of our communities, including those who have not felt such hardship before. My team are continuing to work with Partners to protect the vulnerable people within our communities.

We maintain our presence on our Highland roads, enforcing road traffic legislation, improving road safety and investigating road traffic collisions. I know this has been a particular area of concern.

We have unfortunately seen a slight increase in Serious Assaults, albeit we are

still below the 5 year average. Tragically we have also had murders with the period, rare for our area.

Fraud continues to cause some concern with individuals falling victim to various methods of fraud. We are seeing a slight decrease in reports and are hoping that our increased publicity around these and working with financial institutions is starting to work.

There is a slight reduction YTD in missing person enquiries. A proportion of these missing persons enquiries relate to looked after children failing to return home when required to.

Hate Crime related offences remain low with a slight decrease on the previous year. We continue to support victims of crime to engage with us and feel confident in reporting crimes to us.

Our work tackling Serious and Organised Crime continues, we continue to disrupt these individuals and working effectively with Partners is key. We use these relationships to identify individuals that are vulnerable to exploitation, making early interventions and making the Highlands inhospitable to Serious and Organised Crime Groups.

Finally the implementation of technology within Police Scotland I hope will continue, however with the recent budget announcement of cuts to the Police Service these may not progress as promptly as we would prefer. These budget cuts continue to impact negatively on our Policing footprint across the board.

## Local Policing Priorities

The Local Policing Priorities for the N Division area are decided by data from our Strategic Assessment which details Threats and Risks, and also feedback from Local Authorities, Partners and public in the Your Police survey.



**ROAD SAFETY AND ROAD CRIME**

Collaborate to reduce casualties and crime on our roads



**ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, VIOLENCE AND DISORDER**

Engage with the public and communities to reduce and prevent crime



**ACQUISITIVE CRIME**

Reduce crime through preventing offending and reducing re-offending



**PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

Support people considered vulnerable through working with partners



**SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME**

Reduce the harm caused by serious organised crime including cyber related crime



**TERRORISM AND PUBLIC ORDER**

Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare through collaborative preparedness

## Road Safety and Road Crime

**Intention - With Partners, enhance Road Safety across the Highland Area.**

**Objective – With Partners, deliver a Road Safety Strategy focusing on: Challenging driver behaviour; Education at the road side and elsewhere; Detection of offences linked to contributing factors of Fatal and Serious Road Traffic Collisions and collectively reducing potential harm.**

We have seen increased detections across all road crime in the period, versus last year and the 5 year average, showing our presence on the roads network.

SGJD crime group/classification	Year-to-date (April - December)			
	2021/22	2022/23	5 yr mean	2023/24
Drink, Drug driving offences incl.				
Failure to provide a specimen	157	137	139.8	228
Speeding offences	499	447	493.6	633
Driving while disqualified	13	13	14.0	20
Driving without a licence	79	87	84.6	96
Failure to insure against third party risks	188	224	207.8	269
Seat belt offences	36	28	38.2	83
Mobile phone offences	33	37	30.4	54
Driving Carelessly	175	224	157.0	288
Drivers neglect of traffic directions (NOT pedestrian crossings)	13	23	18.4	34
Using a motor vehicle without test certificate	188	270	201.0	363
Other Group 7 offences	262	332	300.2	439

**Operation CEDAR** - (Challenge, Educate, Detect and Reduce) builds on established practices and will continue to focus on various agencies working in partnership to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in the Highland area. Operation CEDAR involves proactive multi-agency enforcement operations on the roads, which sits alongside education activity aimed at improving driver behaviour of all ages. Partner agencies continue to work together to improve understanding of the factors which could contribute to improving road safety for everyone on the roads and together respond to these issues.

**Anti-Social Behaviour, Disorder and Violence (including Alcohol and Drug misuse)**

**Intention – With Partners, better understand the causes to prevent and reduce instances of Anti-Social Behaviour, Disorder and Violence to enhance community safety across the Highland Area.**

**Objective – Work with Partners to share information, support Education, Prevention, Diversionary and Enforcement Measures linked to harmful alcohol consumption; maintain robust procedures around licensed premises; support victims of violent crime by working with partners to improve service provision and prevent repeat victimisation.**

SGJD crime group/classification	Year-to-date (April - December)				Detection Rate
	2021/22	2022/23	5 yr mean	2023/24	
Murder	0	0	0.4	2	100.0%
Serious assault	25	20	28.4	25	84.0%
Possession of drugs	341	252	336.0	300	87.7%
Common Assault	497	454	481.4	465	71.2%
Common Assault (of emergency workers)	84	75	81.4	68	97.1%

**Harm Prevention Officer** – A Harm Prevention Officer (HPO) role was introduced within the N Division area in November 2020. This role is filled by a Police Constable who undertakes daily liaison between internal/external stakeholders with a view to reducing the risk posed to certain members of the public through alcohol and controlled substance misuse.

The HPO works with other partners to target Cuckooing which is a crime whereby crime groups take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for County Lines offences. The HPO works within the nationally recognised Serious and Organised Crime Strategy (Divert, Deter, Disrupt, Detect) targeting the Divert and Deter strands.

The HPO is fully funded by NHS Highland via the Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership (HADP).

## Acquisitive Crime

**Intention – With Partners and Communities, prevent instances of acquisitive crime across the Highland area.**

**Objective – With Partners, share information, support education, prevention, diversionary and enforcement activity linked to acquisitive crime; develop work with targets – recidivist offenders to reduce reoffending linked to acquisitive crime e.g. Persistent Offenders programme; enhance the use of all media platforms to raise awareness of local and national preventative initiatives.**

SGJD crime group/classification	Year-to-date (April - December)				Detection rate
	2021/22	2022/23	5 yr mean	2023/24	
<i>Housebreaking (incl. Attempts)</i>	50	60	61.0	74	28.4%
<i>Motor vehicle crime</i>	42	49	47.8	57	63.2%
Theft by shoplifting	106	103	123.0	276	70.7%
Fraud	126	148	93.0	133	19.5%

Fraud – The increase in Fraud related crimes last year and continuing to this year has not only been experienced by members of the public residing within the Dingwall and Seaforth area, but across the wider N Division area, Scotland and the United Kingdom. Detection of these crimes is incredibly challenging with perpetrators often out with the United Kingdom.

### Banking Protocol

Following a number of incidents across the N Division area in respect of Frauds and Banking Protocol, work has been ongoing with various Banks within N Division with a view to setting up learning sessions between staff members to talk through Banking Protocol. This has allowed for a better understanding of the Police response, management of vulnerabilities and referrals/support available to victims.

**Rural Watch** - The Highland area is renowned for great natural beauty and the rural communities are safe places in which to live, work and visit. Watch Schemes work well as a crime prevention and detection tool but are also extremely valuable in terms of enabling Highland communities to share information, allowing agencies to send out relevant crime alerts, and empower local communities to be more resilient.

To receive local ALERTS about crime and other threats in your area, simply click the green JOIN button on the Rural Watch Website - [www.ruralwatchscotland.co.uk](http://www.ruralwatchscotland.co.uk)

## Protecting Vulnerable People

**Intention – Protect people at risk of harm.**

**Objective – With Partners and as corporate parents we will deliver the Highland CHAMPS (Highland Champion Board) strategy; with Partners we will focus on safeguarding communities; with Partners we will address emerging issues through Prevention and Intervention.**

SGJD crime group/classification	Year-to-date (April - December)				Detection Rate
	2021/22	2022/23	5 yr mean	2023/24	
Domestic Abuse	338	342	340.0	278	67.9%
Sexual Crimes	178	170	172.2	182	42.3%
Hate Crime	63	81	74.2	96	62.5%
Missing Persons	173	233	-	134	-

### Hate Crime –

Police Scotland underwent a national inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) in relation to Hate Crime with N Division (Highland and Islands) being identified as one of three focussed Divisions. Learning from this had shown the need to ensure the public have confidence in coming to report incidents.

### Missing Persons –

Police Scotland takes every report of a missing person seriously and investigates appropriately with access to local, regional and national specialist resources. Missing persons investigations are a core part of local Policing and it is local officers who undertake all investigations, supported by specialist colleagues where necessary. Further, each Division including, N Division has a dedicated Missing Person Co-ordinator who advises on operational and preventative approaches.

Each Area Command has appointed a local Police liaison officer who maintains contact and liaison with the residential units in their respective area. This role has developed and regular contact has built a good relationship with residential unit(s). Where required, this officer also works in conjunction with the Missing Person Co-ordinator who similarly enjoys a good working relationship with residential units.



## Serious and Organised Crime

**Intention – With Partners, reduce the threat, risk and harm caused by Serious Organised Crime.**

**Objective – With Partners work to safeguard the Highland area by taking all opportunities to prevent crime and make the Highland area a hostile environment for Serious & Organised Crime Groups; to improve outcomes for individuals and communities and reduce offending through prevention, early intervention and diversion; in support of our Partners in the Local Authority and NHS via the Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership Strategy we will direct those who are substance dependant towards recovery through prevention, treatment and support services; with Partners work to reduce the instances of substance misuse in our communities.**

SGJD crime group/classification	Year-to-date (April - December)				Detection Rate
	2021/22	2022/23	5 yr mean	2023/24	
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	8	4	6.6	7	71.4%
Supply of drugs (incl. possession with intent)	24	20	32.4	41	46.3%

**County Lines** - When Organised Crime Groups from major cities such as Birmingham, Derby, Liverpool and London are expanding their drug networks to other areas, bringing with it serious criminal behaviour such as violence, exploitation and abuse. The term County Lines refers to the use of a single telephone number to order drugs, operated from outside the local area. They often set up a base in a rural town for a short time, taking over the home of a vulnerable person by 'cuckooing' and use adults and children to act as drug runners. Preventions and Interventions delivered advisory presentations to Partner agencies including Highland Council (Housing/Social Work) and NHS Highland.

N Division has also recently expanded its team of dedicated officers with the sole purpose of targeting County Line offenders, working in partnership with partner agencies and protecting vulnerable persons.

## Counter Terrorism

**Intention – Support the delivery of the CONTEST strategy to reduce the threat posed by terrorism and domestic extremism.**

**Objective – Strengthen PREVENT work with Partners and institutions; with Partners, support individuals who are vulnerable to terrorism and violent extremism; strengthen PREVENT work in relation to the internet and Social Media; Effective Multi-agency planning in respect of Counter Terrorism is taking place; Develop our ability to respond effectively to any terrorist attack (with a specific focus on emerging high-risk threats, and specialist capabilities).**

Police Constable Lisa Campbell, N Division's Local Counter Terrorism Officer stated:

*“As the Counter Terrorism Liaison Officer (CTLO) for N Division, I ensure areas have a Local Contest Liaison Officer who is kept up to date on latest developments in Contest.*

*I liaise with CT Intelligence, CT Security Advisors, the Prevent Delivery Unit as well as local Area Commanders to address any CT related matters in the area and provide support to the Area Command if required.*

*I can also provide presentations on Act now, Radicalisation awareness, threat overview and current trends. LCLO's can also assist with this within schools etc.*

*I can provide updates on the annual threat overview to local Councils.*

*Work is ongoing with the Highland Council Head of Safeguarding to have a lesson plan on radicalisation put to all Highland Schools”.*

## Crime Statistics

For additional detail, published crime data can also be accessed online via the link below

Crime data - Police ScotlandCrime data - Police Scotland