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Agenda item	3
Report no	WRSL/01/25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Committee**

Date: **20 January 2025**

Report Title: **Police – Area Performance Report**

Report By: **Chief Inspector Calum Smith - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command)**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 To provide an update to Committee Board on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2023-2026.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to note:

- i. Progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2024 – 31 December 2024.

3. Report Format – Police Area Performance Summary Report

3.1 This document will now cover all priorities featured in the Local Policing Plan and evidence Prevention and Intervention work corresponding to each of the Policing Priorities, provide local narrative in relation to Serious and Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource – There are no immediate resource applications arising from this noting report.

4.2 Legal – There are no immediate legal implications arising from this noting report.

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Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – There are no immediate community implications arising from this noting report.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever – There are no immediate implications arising from this noting report.

Risk – There are no immediate implications arising from this noting report.

Gaelic – There are no immediate implications arising from this noting report.

Designation: Chief Inspector

Date: 10/01/2025

Author: Chief Inspector Calum Smith

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Performance Against Local Policing Plan 2023-2026



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Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee Report Monday 20 January 2025

Reporting Period - 01 April 2024 – 31 December 2024



Report by
Chief Inspector Calum Smith
Area Commander – North Highland Area Command

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



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Introduction by Area Commander

Chief Inspector Calum Smith

I present to you the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Scrutiny Report, covering the reporting period 1 April 2024 until the 31 December 2024.

The statistics being reported are now at North Highland Area Command level which incorporates the following Area Committees:-

Black Isle and Easter Ross, Caithness, Dingwall and Seaforth, Sutherland and Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh.

A verbal update will be provided by the Police Scotland representative in relation to the local context of this Area Committee.

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 when it comes to deploying and tasking resources, however, this is only part of our assessment. Listening to the public, elected members and monitoring crime trends all play a part; nonetheless, the data presented in this report and the analysis of same is an important aspect of our planning.

Whilst not wishing to continually bring back the memory of the impact COVID had on matters, it is worthy of note that some of the data referred to in this report is from the COVID affected years and must be borne in mind.

Alongside COVID, in the recent past we saw the effect of the cost-of-living challenges and how this impacted communities, where certain crime types such as theft by shoplifting saw an increase. Notably though, in this reporting period, acquisitive crime has overall (apart from fraud) seen a welcome decrease. In noting this decrease my team and I are all too aware that in addressing criminal behaviour, only one strand of this work relates to detecting crime and in this vein, we continue to work closely with partners to protect the vulnerable people and seek to bring real change to persons and places. The commentary throughout the report highlights some of our ongoing work.

In presenting this report I would like to take the opportunity to highlight our continued proactive work on the road network. In seeking to deliver on our local policing priority around road safety and road crime both the 'Road Safety and Road Crime' section of this report along with 'Group 8 - Road Traffic Offences' section of the 'Crime Statistics' part of this report evidence the continued drive we have undertaken to ensure our road network is as safe as possible. I know this has been a particular area of concern. My team continue to engage with various partners to ensure the Highlands continues to be a safe and enjoyable place to drive.

Violent crime has seen a very slight increase; however, detection rates have remained high.

You will note from the report a reduction in missing person enquiries from last year. Missing person enquiries place significant demands on our resource, but as can be seen in the commentary attached to the relevant section of the report, we continue proactive engagement with our partners to seek to reduce this demand wherever possible.

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. In the reporting period we have introduced a proactive policing team to the North Highland policing area, seeking to target local drug activity more robustly.

I hope the report will provide confidence as to the continued work my officers undertake day and night to seek to best serve our communities.

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

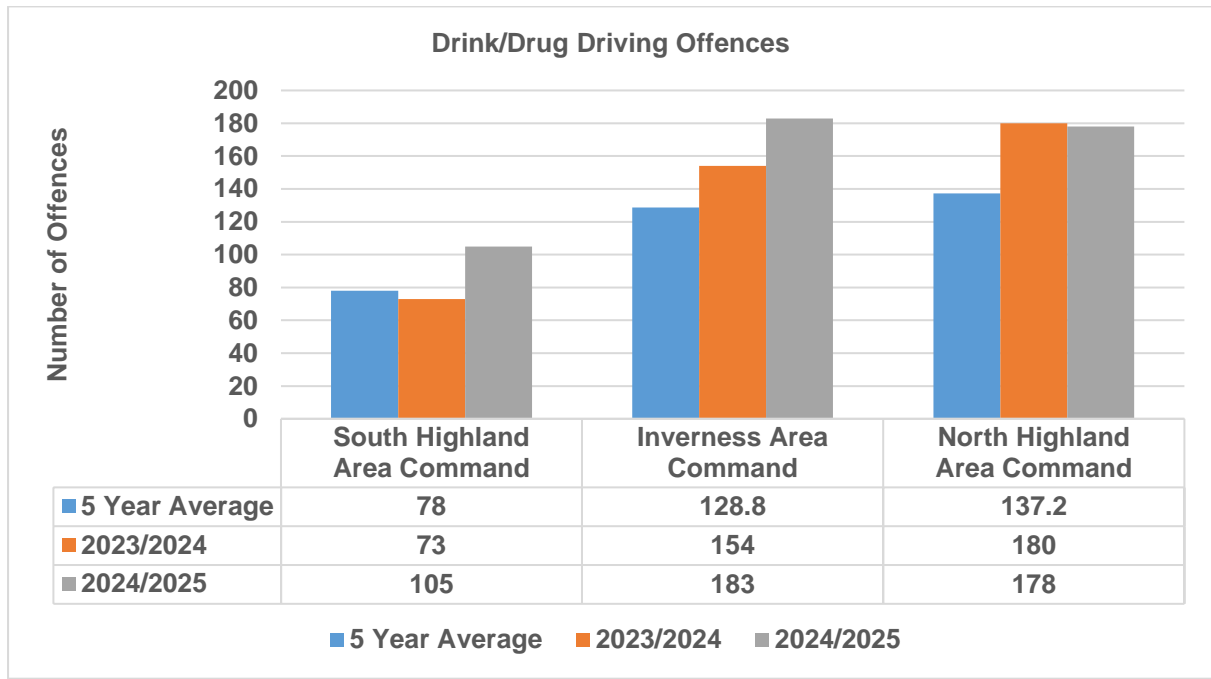
Road Safety and Road Crime

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.

	5 Year Average	3 Year Average	YTD 2023/2024	YTD 2024/2025	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Number of Fatalities - Road Traffic Collisions	6.4	6.7	5	3	-2	-
Drink/Drug Driving Offences	137.2	149.0	180	178	-2	88.8%
Speeding Offences	434.6	449.0	514	381	-133	100.0%

2024/2025 Drink/Drug Driving Offences -



**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.

	5 Year Average	3 Year Average	YTD 2023/2024	YTD 2024/2025	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Murder	0.6	0.7	2	0	-2	-
Assault	419.0	412.7	406	403	-3	68.2%
Serious Assault	22.0	19.3	18	26	8	88.5%
Drug (Possession) Offences	288.2	262.7	245	224	-21	96.0%

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).

No Knives, Better Lives - No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is a national capacity-building programme that supports primary prevention work related to knife carrying in Scotland. In 2009, the NKBL National Delivery Team at YouthLink Scotland and the Scottish Government began supporting partners in 11 selected Local Authority areas to implement NKBL. The approach to prevention is informed by the principles and values of youth work and a public health approach to violence prevention. The focus is not just on what it is we do not want young people to do and how to stop them doing it, but also what we want young people to be able to do, how we support them to understand and navigate risk and to make positive life choices.

Police Scotland’s Prevention and Intervention Officers supported this initiative in the Highland area. This is further complemented by the Joint Education and Police Knives in School Protocol which has been progressed.

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.

	5 Year Average	3 Year Average	YTD 2023/2024	YTD 2024/2025	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Housebreaking (Dwelling)	26.2	26.3	28	22	-6	22.7%
Fraud	100.2	122.7	112	113	1	16.8
Theft by Shoplifting	131.0	148.3	252	132	-120	76.5
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	26.4	26.0	39	18	-21	72.2

Fraud –

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. This has and will continue to allow Bank staff to be aware as to the point in they feel that they can/should intervene.

Parcel Scam Fraud

General awareness messaging around parcel/delivery company scams has been circulated electronically to all housing providers across the N Division area and to the University of the Highlands and Islands for sharing with their staff, clients and students.

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. However, the nature of the environment and way of life means there are some crime prevention tips particularly relevant to rural life. 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

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.

	5 Year Average	3 Year Average	YTD 2023/2024	YTD 2024/2025	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Rape	31.6	30.3	31	40	9	
Domestic Crime*				394		63.5%
Hate Crime**				64		67.2%
Missing Persons*			138	132	-6	

*Please note, due to the different sources of data being used, and the different methodology/ counting rules, comparison of recorded domestic crimes from 1st April 2024 with recorded domestic crimes prior to 1st April 2024 would not be advised.

** Please note, due to the different sources of data being used, and the different methodology/ counting rules, comparison of recorded hate crimes from 1st April 2024 with recorded hate crimes prior to 1st April 2024 would not be advised.

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.

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.

Missing Person Category	2023/2024	2024/2025	Variation
Adult	57	44	-13
Cared for Adult	4	4	-
Care Experienced Young People	27	32	5
Child	50	52	2
Absconder/Wanted	0	0	-
Total	138	132	-6

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

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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.

	5 Year Average	3 Year Average	YTD 2023/2024	YTD 2024/2025	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Drug (Supply) Offences	20.8	17.0	19	29	10	65.5%

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.

Police Scotland has relaunched an awareness-raising initiative aimed at preventing young people from falling into a life of crime. Working in partnership with the Scottish Government, Police have devised an educational pack for young people that shows the devastating effects of Serious Organised Crime.

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 response effectively to any terrorist attack (with a specific focus on emerging high-risk threats, and specialist capabilities).

WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) - The workshop covers issues such as crime, normal social processes that are used to influence and manipulate, case studies that cut across the spectrum of extremism, terrorist ideologies and factors which may contribute to an individual's susceptibility to a terrorist ideology.

In particular, it seeks to support participants to recognise that using their existing expertise and professional judgement, they may be able to recognise potentially vulnerable individuals who may be susceptible to being persuaded by an extremist or terrorist ideology. Workshops delivered to partners across the Highland area.

ACT Early is a program delivered to schools across the Highland area. The ACT Early session is a vehicle for debate around the sensitive issue of violent extremism within communities. As such it is an enabler for community participants to air grievances, debate matters of interest to them and work through a group problem solving experience. The following links can provide more information regarding the program:

<https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>
<https://actearly.uk/>

Crime Statistics

Crime Bulletin Categories	North Highland Area Command					
	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23	2023 /24	2024 /25
TOTAL CRIME & OFFENCES	4065	4227	4187	4382	5020	4564
Group 1 - Non Sexual Crimes of Violence	576	594	566	546	559	595
Murder (excluding culpable homicide at common law)	0	1	0	0	2	0
Culpable homicide (common law)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culpable homicide (other)	0	1	1	1	0	0
Attempted murder	0	6	0	2	5	1
Serious Assault (incl. FGM, culpable & reckless conduct - causing injury)	25	27	21	19	18	26
Common Assault (of an emergency worker)	73	88	72	62	64	74
Common Assault	437	420	425	407	406	403
Robbery (including assault with intent to rob)	2	5	5	3	6	3
Stalking	6	5	6	7	10	15
Cruel & Unnatural treatment of children	0	3	4	1	2	2
Threats and extortion	5	7	10	23	18	19
Other group 1 crimes	6	6	4	2	2	8
Group 2 - Sexual Offences	150	145	162	155	160	179
Rape	20	47	30	30	31	40
Attempted rape	2	1	0	0	0	0
Sexual assault	48	39	36	47	64	47
Crimes associated with Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent photos of children	7	13	10	14	10	15
Communicating indecently	11	12	11	17	7	15
Causing to view sexual activity or images	34	12	20	25	23	33
Threatening or Disclosure of intimate image*	12	5	10	5	4	9
Other Group 2 crimes	16	16	45	17	21	20
Group 3 - Crimes of Dishonesty	450	479	455	555	657	476
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - dwelling house	20	32	24	27	28	22
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - non-dwelling	10	8	4	7	9	6
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - other premises	22	22	17	22	28	8
Opening Lockfast Places - Motor Vehicle	3	2	2	1	2	2
Theft of a motor vehicle	29	25	24	15	39	18
Theft from a Motor Vehicle, Insecure etc	12	17	7	24	7	14
Attempt theft of motor vehicle	2	2	2	1	4	3
Opening Lockfast Places - NOT Motor Vehicle	17	10	9	16	25	9
Common theft	137	153	133	169	134	126
Theft by shoplifting	129	81	97	96	252	132

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Fraud	44	89	116	140	112	113
Other Group 3 crimes	25	38	20	37	17	23
Group 4 - Damage and Reckless Behaviour	424	412	410	495	402	376
Fireraising	26	19	11	22	17	26
Vandalism (incl. reckless damage, etc.)	381	366	384	458	371	330
Reckless conduct (with firearms)	0	0	2	0	0	1
Culpable & reckless conduct (not firearms)	17	26	12	13	13	18
Other Group 4 crimes	0	1	1	2	1	1
Group 5 - Crimes Against Society	568	698	562	509	546	494
Possession firearm/offensive weapon/knife in prison (not used in crime)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possession offensive weapon/knife in school (not used in crime)	4	0	2	1	1	1
Possession offensive weapon/knife in a private place (not used in crime)	0	0	0	0	3	3
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife (not used in crime)	36	49	32	21	34	19
Possession firearm/offensive weapon/knife in prison (used in criminal activity)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possession offensive weapon/knife in school (used in criminal activity)	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife NEC (used in criminal activity)	14	30	19	30	38	23
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	8	6	8	4	7	0
Supply of drugs (incl. possession with intent)	21	32	16	16	19	29
Other drugs offences (incl. importation)	1	1	0	0	0	0
Possession of drugs	302	351	311	232	245	224
Offences relating to serious and organised crime	2	4	0	0	0	0
Bail offences (other than absconding)	81	91	87	105	90	83
Other crimes against public justice	97	133	86	99	109	111
Other crimes against society	2	1	1	0	0	0
Group 6 - Anti-Social Offences	360	320	360	361	383	334
Breach of the Peace	37	18	15	15	26	14
Threatening or abusive behaviour	282	289	327	323	333	285
Hate aggravated conduct (incl. stirring up hatred)	1	3	4	5	3	10
Drunk and incapable	0	1	0	1	0	0
Consume alcohol in designated place (local bye-laws)	11	2	3	1	9	11
Other alcohol related offences	11	4	2	6	4	7
Urinating	18	3	9	10	8	7
Group 7 - Miscellaneous Offences	100	129	135	125	138	134
Wildlife offences	6	12	9	13	12	3
Offences involved animals (not wildlife)	12	13	13	13	25	33
Community and public order offences	56	74	79	76	78	70
Environmental offences	10	12	14	5	4	1

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Licensing offences	13	17	19	18	17	16
Other misc. offences	3	1	1	0	2	11
Group 8 - Road Traffic Offences	1446	1450	1537	1636	2175	1976
Dangerous driving offences	49	58	80	56	54	60
Driving Carelessly	125	108	153	199	249	213
Driving under the influence	99	140	144	123	180	178
Speeding offences	396	430	460	373	514	381
Seat belt offences	51	24	29	26	79	50
Mobile phone offences	28	18	30	33	53	66
Unlawful use of motor vehicle	435	423	409	533	683	668
Vehicle defect offences	85	105	73	113	144	131
Drivers neglect of traffic directions (NOT pedestrian crossings)	13	10	10	20	28	22
Road Traffic Offences (involving bicycle/tricycle)	3	0	0	1	2	0
Other Group 8 Offences	162	134	149	159	189	207

For additional detail, published crime data can also be accessed online via the following link:-
[Crime data - Police Scotland](#)