



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Authority Meeting</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>30 November 2023</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>COSLA, Edinburgh</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Chief Constable's Report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Jo Farrell Chief Constable</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Noting</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Authority with information relating to the Police Service, policing and the state of crime.

This report is submitted as a Standing Agenda Item.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The purpose of Police Scotland is 'to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland' and our focus is Keeping People Safe. This paper is intended to provide Members with an update on key activity and events.

## 2. TACKLING THREAT AND RISK

### SERIOUS VIOLENCE INCLUDING HOMICIDE

Since the last meeting of the Scottish Police Authority Board on 28 September 2023, there have been 10 murders at various locations across Scotland. Each death is unique, and every investigation presents its own particular challenges. As a national service, along with our partners, we are able to respond consistently to every murder, with empathy and compassion, to provide the best service recognising the lasting impact on the families and in the communities where they occur.

Our professional response to murders and homicide was underlined at the end of October when published figures showed the number of homicides in Scotland to be at the lowest level on record and that each one since the inception of Police Scotland had been solved.

This is great credit to our dedicated murder investigators, our superb forensic science colleagues, and the strong relationship the public has with local policing officers, giving communities confidence to support and assist investigations. I thank everyone who contributes to securing justice and answers for victims and their loved ones.

#### Significant Convictions

On 25 March 2023, Charles Wilson, aged 40, was discovered with serious injuries at a flat in Tontine Park, Renton, following report of a fire. A murder investigation was initiated resulting in the arrest of Gary Meikle, aged 43, who pled guilty to murder and attempt to defeat the ends of justice at the High Court in Glasgow on 29 September. He was given a life sentence with a minimum imprisonment term of 19-and-a-half years.

On 16 January 2023, Jacqueline Kerr, 54, was found dead in her home at Sunnyside Road, Aberdeen, having sustained a number of serious injuries. On 5 October, Christopher Cook, aged 44, pled guilty to her murder at Aberdeen High Court and was sentenced to a life sentence with a minimum imprisonment term of 20 years.

On 25 October 2023, at Edinburgh High Court, Christopher McGowan, aged 28, was given a life sentence with a minimum of 23 years imprisonment having previously been found guilty of the sustained brutal attack and murder of Claire Inglis in March 2021.

I hope these convictions and sentences bring some comfort to the victims' families and friends, and our thoughts remain with them.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Violence against women and girls in all its forms has no place in our society. Police Scotland will continue to target those who commit such acts, working with partner agencies across Scotland to support victims.

### **Significant Convictions**

On 11 October 2023, Stewart Braisher, aged 33, was sentenced at Edinburgh High Court to 12 years (nine years imprisonment, three years extended) having been found guilty of seven violent and sexual offences against four women over a 15 year period between 2005 and 2020.

Non-Harassment Orders (NHOs) were granted for all victims for indefinite periods and Stewart Braisher will be subject to notification requirements for an indefinite period.

On 11 October 2023, Kevin Hamilton, aged 35, was sentenced at Glasgow High Court to seven years' imprisonment having been found guilty of five violent offences against two women over an 11 year period between 2011 and 2022.

On 26 October 2023, Stuart Watt, aged 43, was convicted at Edinburgh High Court of violent and sexual crimes against a female adult and a female child. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment, two years extended sentence and a 99 year NHO.

On 27 October 2023, Barry Taylor, aged 55, was sentenced at Edinburgh High Court to seven years with seven year NHOs for all victims, having been found guilty of five violent offences against three women over a 12 year period between 2009 and 2021.

These crimes have had a profound impact on the lives of all those involved and these convictions send a strong message as to the consequences perpetrators will face. We remain committed to supporting victims of sexual crime and will use all available resources to detect offenders.

## COUNTY LINES

As previously reported County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The County Line is the mobile phone line used to take the order of drugs.

Between 9 and 15 October 2023, Police Scotland engaged in activity focusing on vulnerability, safeguarding and enforcement.

A number of addresses believed to be used for cuckooing (a practice where people take over a person's home and use it to facilitate exploitation) were visited, with measures safeguarding 17 vulnerable people subsequently implemented.

Additionally, 25 people were arrested for a variety of offences. Drugs including cocaine, heroin, crack cocaine, cannabis, and tablets, with an estimated street value of over £313,000 were seized along with over £220,000 in cash.

Police Scotland continue to work in collaboration with the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) and other forces, to protect juveniles across different force areas.

### 3. DELIVERING ON OUR PRIORITIES

#### CHIEF CONSTABLE'S PRIORITIES AND OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Under my leadership changes will be an evolution, not a revolution. As part of that clarity and simplification of our direction I have set our strategic focus.

I am placing Trust, Confidence and Performance at the top of our agenda.

I want us to be highly trusted by the people we serve. When the public call us they must have the confidence that our service delivery will be of the highest possible standard. Key to delivering trust and confidence across our communities is our visible, engaging and proactive local policing teams.

I want us to be willing to challenge ourselves so that we continually improve; and to be high performing. My operational focus will be on three things:

Firstly, focusing on Threat, Harm and Risk, an area where Police Scotland performs exceptionally well, and is in line with our commitment to community wellbeing.

Second, focusing on Prevention, Problem Solving and Proactivity. Reacting to crime and antisocial behaviour is an important part of what we do but will only get us so far. As good as we are at being professionally reactive, further increased success lies in preventing the chances of people becoming the victims of crime.

To successfully tackle new and emerging threats we must get on top of demand.

Our performance focus must revolve around effective prevention, problem-solving and proactivity which is synonymous with demand reduction.

Working closely with our partners, including Scottish Government, we need to address the growing demand placed on us by other agencies. A prime example of this is in the field of Mental Health crises: We will continue to respond to people in crises, but our involvement in mental health has crept way beyond that. We need to redefine our responsibility, and the responsibility of others in the health care professions, so we can protect our priority areas of business. I know this impact is felt most by those officers on the front line.

My third operational focus is staff wellbeing. Our people are the greatest asset we have. I want them to feel supported and included and to have a voice. My objectives can only be achieved if the staff and officers are well and motivated to serve the people of Scotland.

My priorities align neatly with our broader strategic outcomes, but I believe they will bring clarity of purpose and a real focus.

We need to regularly ask ourselves if the activity we're undertaking improves the safety of our communities or the wellbeing of our staff. If it doesn't, then we need to stop doing it.

## **PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

### **Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland**

The eighth anniversary of the implementation of the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse in Scotland (DSDAS) was reached on 1 October. The scheme is designed to help tackle and prevent domestic abuse, giving people the right to ask on their own behalf, or on behalf of others, for disclosure of information from Police Scotland, should they suspect a current partner may have an abusive past. Where information or intelligence exists, Police Scotland also has the power to tell individuals that they may be at risk of domestic abuse in their

relationship. A DSDAS Campaign was devised to coincide with this anniversary and comprised of a three week targeted social media campaign, with a focus on bystander interventions.

### **Significant Conviction – Non-Recent Sexual Abuse**

On 19 September 2023, Alexander Philip, 57, and Craig Hodgkins, 52, were found guilty of sexual offences against five girls aged between six and 13. The offences were committed over a 40 year period between 1978 and 2008. On 27 October 2023, both men received 10 year prison sentences.

The convictions were the result of significant inquiries by specialist officers investigating crimes in Edinburgh, Hamilton and Airdrie.

The offending may have gone undetected had it not been for the bravery of women coming forward and reporting the circumstances to police. I hope the convictions of these men serves as a reminder that time is no barrier for Police Scotland to investigate any report of criminality and we will utilise all resources at our disposal to bring perpetrators of sexual abuse to justice.

### **Significant Conviction – Non-Recent Child Abuse**

On 14 November 2023, at Glasgow High Court, five men aged 41, 45, 47, 47, and 50, and two women aged 39 and 41 were convicted of sexually abusing children in the Glasgow area between 2012 and 2019. A further female, aged 38, was also convicted of assault. All will be sentenced in January 2024.

Following a long complex and challenging investigation for a team of officers and staff who had to work through the most harrowing evidence to bring those responsible for these despicable crimes to justice.

This had been a horrific ordeal for the young victims who were subjected to years of unimaginable abuse. The levels of depravity shown in this case are extremely rare in Scotland and the courage of the victims was essential in securing this conviction.

Our thoughts remain with them and I hope this outcome can help them in moving forward.

## **WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

### **Operation Tarlac - Protests**

As a result of the conflict in the Middle East there have been vigils and protests across the UK. Operation Tarlac is the Policing response to these protests.

Engagement and liaison remains ongoing across the UK to ensure shared national situational awareness and consistency in approach to the policing of these events across Scotland.

Since October 7, 126 protests have been held across the country. The policing of these have been proportionate, using local officers, supported by specialist trained Protest Liaison Officers, and involved a static element to the protest followed by impromptu marches.

The tone and nature of these protests in Scotland have been positive and respectful, with few counter-demonstrations being observed. However we have recorded a relatively small increase in the number of hate incidents being reported, and these are being thoroughly investigated.

On Saturday 18 November, 3000 people participated in an unauthorised demonstration in Glasgow city centre, during which a number of pyrotechnics were detonated. The event organiser was warned and subsequently reported in respect of holding an unauthorised procession.

Engagement continues with communities across Scotland and our policing response will continue to be proportionate, and rights based.

#### **4. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT**

##### **CHIEF CONSTABLE ENGAGEMENT**

Since taking up post in October, I have had the pleasure of meeting with key strategic partners including, the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, The Permanent Secretary, The Lord Advocate, Crown Agent, the Convener of the Criminal Justice Committee, the Lord Advocate and Solicitor General. These positive sessions provided the opportunity to discuss shared challenges and objectives and I look forward to building upon the strong relationships already in place.

I also had the opportunity to address the Scottish Leaders Forum at Verity House, Edinburgh on 1 November on the theme of "leading together to secure the future of public services in Scotland". This was an excellent opportunity to meet with some of Scotland's most senior leaders.

On 23 November I joined colleagues at the Scottish Police Federation's annual awards ceremony which was held at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh.

The awards shine a light on how officers stand up for and with our communities and I am extremely grateful to the Scottish Police Federation for their crucial work in supporting policing in Scotland.

I commend and thank all police officers and their families for their commitment to public service and offer my warmest congratulations to award nominees and recipients.

On 24 November I met Sheriff Principal Aisha Anwar to progress discussions into Criminal Justice reform focussing on more efficient and timely ways of working, digitising our processes, speeding up justice for victims and creating capacity so that we can tackle Threat, Harm, Risk, and Prevention.

## **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

Since the last Authority meeting, Police Scotland has given evidence at the Scottish Parliament on several occasions across differing Committees on the impact of forthcoming legislation, as well as policy matters of wider interest to MSPs and the communities of Scotland.

On 31 October, the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee considered evidence relating to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill Reconsideration Stage. Police Scotland reiterated its commitment to upholding the rights of children and young people in alignment with our values of fairness, integrity and respect being at the heart of everything we do.

On 1 November, Stage 1 scrutiny of the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill was discussed by the Criminal Justice Committee focusing on trauma informed practice. An internal working group has been established within Police Scotland to progress training to further embed best practice across the organisation.

On 16 November, a round table evidence session with partners was provided to the Public Audit Committee, following the recently published Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission report on Adult Mental Health. This session focused on how Adult Mental Health services in Scotland are being delivered to ensure that the public receive the right support from the most appropriate agency during a period of crisis.

Arrangements have been made for me to attend an introductory evidence session with the Criminal Justice Committee on 20 December. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with the Committee the priorities for Police Scotland, recognising the important role of the Criminal Justice Committee to both scrutinise and support the criminal justice system.

## **COSLA**

On 17 November, Deputy Chief Constable Malcolm Graham KPM and other members of the Force Executive attended the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Scrutiny Conveners Forum, along with the Chair of the SPA, Martyn Evans. This was an excellent opportunity to engage with local scrutiny conveners on a number of areas of shared concern, including implications of this year's budget and Local Policing Service Delivery Review focusing on the potential impact on our local communities.

## **5. SIGNIFICANT OPERATIONAL EVENTS**

### **OPERATION MOONBEAM**

Operation Moonbeam is the nationally co-ordinated, multi-agency response to the events surrounding bonfire night, including the marked rise in anti-social behaviour and criminality that is traditionally observed across the country during this period, including attacks on emergency workers.

Operation Moonbeam took place between 31 October and 5 November 2023. A proportionate and robust policing plan was delivered, co-ordinating the work of Local Policing Divisions, partners, and public order command and resource, to effectively respond to incidents of violence and disorder.

While the volume of firework related incidents experienced remained comparatively low, there were incidents of disorder in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee involving local youths using fireworks as weapons and in some instances directing these at people, vehicles and buildings.

On Saturday 5 November, within the Niddrie area of Edinburgh a crowd of youths engaged in unprecedented levels of disorder and violence resulting in injuries to officers. Enquiries continue to identify those responsible and support is in place for all officers affected by the incidents.

The level of violent disorder directed at officers was deplorable. 60 officers reported being injured during the weekend suffering a variety of injuries including burns and loss of hearing.

To date 15 people have been charged in connection with the disorder and a dedicated investigative team remains in place to progress enquiries and bring offenders to justice.

## SEVERE WEATHER INCIDENTS

### Flooding and land slips

During October a number of severe weather related incidents caused significant impact and disruption to communities across Scotland.

Between 6 and 8 October 2023, following an Amber Warning of rain across most of Scotland, a national Major Incident was declared in order to support local resilience partnership activations across Scotland.

Significant challenges were experienced in Argyll and Bute, Forth Valley, and Highlands and Islands, due to high levels of flooding and landslips impacting on roads, homes, businesses and the transport network in Argyll and Bute, causing short-term isolation of some communities. Partners worked closely to provide a co-ordinated emergency response to those communities, with a particular focus on the provision of assistance to those who were most vulnerable.

### Storm Babet

On Thursday 19 October 2023, the MET office issued Red Weather warnings in relation to Storm Babet. Unprecedented rainfall in the North East area led to significant flooding, damage to property and disruption to the transport network.

A major incident was declared in the Tayside region, where 422 homes in the Brechin and Finavon areas were evacuated. Police Scotland received over 600 weather related incidents and tragically three weather related fatalities were reported.

In conjunction with resilience partners, Police Scotland formed an integral part of the multi-agency response to both of these operations. Numerous local and specialist resources deployed, demonstrating the utmost professionalism, bravery and commitment in rescuing and supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. This was an incredible response to some of the worst weather in living memory, I am extremely proud of our response.

## 6. OUR PEOPLE

### CHIEF CONSTABLE COMMITMENTS

During my first few weeks it has been my priority to meet as many of our staff and officers. I have appreciated the frank and very valuable conversations had across the country. As previously highlighted, people are our greatest asset and as the Chief Constable, my commitments to all officers and staff are these:

- I will advocate to get the very best annual financial settlement and make a strong case for greater capital investment, particularly in digital capabilities.
- I will focus our change activity on projects that will have the greatest benefit to our communities and our people, including the roll out of body worn video as soon as possible.
- I will simplify our strategic planning arrangements and governance processes, eliminating bureaucracy and empowering our people to do the right thing.
- I will increase opportunities for staff to communicate with me and the Executive Team and share their views with us. Their ideas and creativity should and will influence how policing is delivered.
- I will improve the timeliness and quality of our Occupational Health services as part of my commitment to the wellbeing and safety of our people.
- I will preserve and strengthen our Community Policing model.
- I will review our approach to Reward and Recognition to ensure we recognise our unsung heroes and our achievements.

#### **POLICE STAFF PAY AWARD**

A pay award for 2023-24 has been agreed for all police staff members in Scotland. The award is consistent with the pay deal agreed for police officers in September 2023 and includes increases to and the introduction of new allowances.

The agreement recognises the valuable contribution our police staff make in supporting and keeping people and communities across Scotland safe. This also ensures a cumulative 12.35% increase in staff pay since 1 April 2022, which mirrors wage growth for police officers, the fire service and teachers.

Recognising and rewarding the hard work of police staff is vital and I thank everyone who has contributed to reaching this agreement.

#### **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Throughout October 2023, Police Scotland, came together with colleagues at Supporting Ethnic Minority Police employees for Equality in Race (SEMPER) Scotland to celebrate and recognise Black History Month. Events were held to highlight and better understand the accomplishments and experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic People. On 3 October 2023, a launch event was held at the Police Scotland Headquarters, Tulliallan, with a keynote address being delivered by Reverend Mina Smallman, campaigner for reforming policing in the UK.

On 31 October 2023, I addressed representatives of the Scottish Police Authority, the Scottish Government, members of the Police Scotland Executive,

Staff Associations and Local Policing Divisions and provided an overview on progress and next steps beyond Black History Month.

## **RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTIONS**

We continue to work on recruitment and have recently held both virtual and in-person recruitment events to provide potential candidates with more information about a career in policing.

It has been my pleasure to thank and congratulate police staff and police officers receiving their Long Service and Good Conducts awards at two ceremonies since taking up post. Friends and families attended celebration events at Police Scotland Headquarters in October and November, and I was grateful for the opportunity to personally thank and congratulate the 66 recipients for the significant contribution they continue to make to public service.

On 23 November 2023, I was delighted to promote a total of 76 officers and 13 members of police staff at a ceremony at Police Scotland Headquarters, Tulliallan. I passed on my congratulations to each of them, and wish them well as they step up into their new leadership roles.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to note the information contained in this report.