



## **Community Confidence Action Research – Wick Engagement Results**

### **Introduction**

On July 12<sup>th</sup> 2023, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland held an engagement session with representatives from the community of Wick as part of the Community Confidence Action Research Project.

The day focused on the [findings of a recent survey conducted in Wick](#) and sought to gain insights on how people felt policing in Wick could be enhanced via a table discussion exploring the following questions:

1. Do you recognise Wick in these findings and in what ways?
2. Is there anything you feel is missing from the findings or would want to add?
3. What do you think could enhance confidence in policing in Wick?

This paper summarises the key themes from this engagement and the ideas people had for enhancing confidence in policing.

Notes taken by facilitators were collated to identify ideas expressed by people that could enhance confidence in policing in the area. This led to the identification of three key areas which are detailed in this paper (Presence, Communication and Contact/Engagement).

### **Views on the survey results**

Participants largely agreed with findings of survey (low levels of confidence in policing) and stated that there was nothing unexpected or surprising to them.

A number of points came up in discussion at this point. 101 call handling times were judged to be too long and access to the police station at Wick was limited, with narrow and inconsistent opening hours. There was a shared view that the police are not seen often enough and are therefore not present/available at community events.

There was also some frustration that positive messages about crime reduction are not getting through to people locally, and participants also claimed that historical issues about police and community relations in Wick continue to get more attention, particularly on social media, and this is overshadowing matters and affecting confidence. Participants also felt that Wick is too often seen as remote-rural, yet it is a town with many issues and needs more commonly associated with urban areas. There are also high demands associated with road

safety, although participants gave a positive view on the use of countryside rangers to tackle issues linked to the seasonal NC500 tourism route.

## **Ideas for Enhancing Confidence**

### **Increasing Police Presence at Community Events (Presence)**

Presence at local events was considered valuable and a driver of confidence, and there was a strong appetite for the police to run a programme of regular drop-ins at various locations e.g. the library, the monthly market, as well as at specific events such as the autumn food festival, the Christmas Fair, Harbour Day. It was felt that this needed to be in a physical form such as a small marquee or stand, rather than in a vehicle, to avoid the perception that the police would be called away at short notice. In this sense it would be like the police station is coming to the people, rather the people have to go to the police station. The police could also use this to help with local recruitment to policing, given issues relating to recruitment and retention that affect remote communities of Scotland.

### **Regular Communication to the Community (Communication)**

It was felt that news about police work and positive outcomes is not reaching the community effectively and there was an appetite among participants to receive a newsletter, perhaps monthly, including crime and incident statistics and publishing details of forthcoming drop-ins/pop-ups. It was judged that the newsletter would need to be in both paper and digital format to maximise its reach and accessibility, and a number of participants would be keen to help with distribution and circulation across networks.

### **Engagement and Resource Sustainability (Contact/Engagement)**

In relation to more strategic issues outwith the Project's scope, it was considered that regular progress updates would be positively received from Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority regarding:

- Advocating for a better system-wide response to 24/7 mental health / safeguarding demand.
- Extending the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers programme to more communities, including Wick.
- Increasing police staff resources to ensure resilient staffing of front office counters at police stations.
- Promoting local recruitment to the police to encourage greater retention of experienced officers.
- Developing the Community Championing role.
- Encouraging greater sustainability about funding for projects beyond short-term arrangements.

**Event Feedback**

In total 1 feedback form was received, with the participant finding the event useful.