



SCOTTISH POLICE
AUTHORITY
ÙGH DARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

Agenda Item 5

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	22 May 2025
Location	Clayton Hotel, Glasgow
Title of Paper	Chief Constable's Report
Presented By	Jo Farrell Chief Constable
Recommendation to Members	For Noting
Appendix Attached	Appendix A – Chief Constable's Report May 2025

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

- 1.1 The attached Chief Constable's Report provides the Authority with information relating to the Police Service, policing and the state of crime.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 There are no further details on this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications in this report. Any financial implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct personnel implications in this report. Any personnel implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications in this report. Any legal implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Given the nature of the report there are reputational implications however all reputational implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct social implications in this report. Any social implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 Given the nature of the report there is potential community impact implications however community impact relating to subjects referenced have been fully considered at the time.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct equalities implications in this report. Any equalities implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environment implications in this report. Any environment Implications relating to subjects referenced are fully considered at the time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

OFFICIAL



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

POILEAS ALBA

Chief Constable's Report

May 2025

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Chief Constable's Report May 2025

Overview

This month, I provide an overview of disruption and enforcement, including dozens of arrests, in response to targeted attacks in the East and West of Scotland, under Operation Portaledge.

I want to begin by condemning the actions of those involved and thanking our communities for their support and assistance in making Scotland a hostile environment for those involved in organised crime.

A team of detectives is working closely with local policing officers and operational support colleagues. I also want to recognise and thank Scottish Police Authority Forensics for their contribution to what is one of our largest ongoing investigations.

Our commitment to tackling organised crime is also underlined by Operation Intensity, which has resulted in 100 arrests as well as the seizure of illegal drugs and firearms.

We'll continue to work with partners at international, national, regional and local levels to clear organised crime and build resilience in communities and I want to thank colleagues in local authorities and the Scottish Fire and Rescue for their support.

I highlight our approach to on-street prostitution, which focuses on targeted action to signpost women to support while deterring kerb crawling. Prostitution is a form of violence against women and girls and our approach seeks to build trust and confidence in policing, while making communities safer and supporting victims.

Road safety continues to be an important focus for Police Scotland as part of a broader partnership approach to reduce the devastation of fatal and serious collisions.

I'm hugely grateful to Iain Dominick who powerfully shared the story of his son Ross, who tragically lost his life, to support our plea to all road users to look twice and prevent further deaths.

Preventing harm and stopping crime before it happens is key to getting on top of demand and I outline partnership work with Trading Standards to prevent door-step crime.

Earlier this month, we also outlined our approach to strengthening our response to cyber enabled crime during an evidence session at the Scottish Parliament.

My report outlines just a few examples of how Police Scotland is delivering for communities. That can only be achieved by our professional, skilled and dedicated workforce.

Last Thursday, as part of our ongoing officer recruitment campaign, members of our Chief Officer Team welcomed new probationary constables to Police Scotland at events across the country.

I also outline the fantastic successes of our valued Special Constables who came together for their annual conference earlier this month.

This report sets out that we have received pay award claims from both officers and staff, while also describing some family friendly policies introduced as part of our efforts to improve total reward for our people.

Through our workforce survey, we know we must do more to connect with our people and I outline engagement sessions with officers and staff to continue to share our vision for policing and provide a clear message that everyone in Police Scotland has a role in delivering for our communities.

At the same time, I continue to advocate for policing and lead strategic engagement with key partners and civic society and I detail some of this work.

Such sessions are important opportunities to continue to be the good partner that Police Scotland is, while also being confident about our strength, our story and our success.

Lastly, Audit Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland have published the scope of their joint best value audit of policing in Scotland, including Police Scotland.

Policing in Scotland, including Police Scotland, the Authority, and SPA Forensics, has a strong evidence base of delivering best value and I welcome the audit as an opportunity to support our commitment to continuous improvement.

Safer communities

Operation Portaledge

A dedicated team from our Specialist Crime Division has been working alongside divisional officers and operational support colleagues since March to investigate targeted attacks in both the East and West of the country. This is one of the largest investigations we have ongoing in Police Scotland.

A total of 35 arrests have already been made, 14 stolen vehicles have been recovered, and 3000 hours of CCTV footage has been reviewed. Local officers have been carrying out intelligence-led patrols to disrupt the activities of criminals and build reassurance in our communities. Armed policing officers have been using their specialist skills and professionalism to support the operation and safely carry out arrests.

As well as carrying out days of action and disruption activities, there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes, including exploring forensic opportunities and analysis of digital devices.

We want to thank our colleagues at SPA Forensics for prioritising this work and ensuring our officers have the results and resources to make arrests quickly and bring people to court.

While some of this work may not be as visible, the public can be assured we are working tirelessly to build cases and are following a number of significant lines of enquiry.

We have had a good response to our appeals and I want to thank the public for their help and information so far. The support of our communities is vital in tackling serious organised crime, preventing violence and getting justice for victims.

Operation Intensity

As part of Operation Intensity, officers have made 100 arrests, seized more than 200 kilograms of illegal drugs, took three firearms off the street and safeguarded 11 children as part efforts to dismantle a Scottish organised crime gang.

The investigation began in May 2023 and involved officers from the Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism Unit, who targeted a well-resourced criminal network exploiting vulnerable people in some of our most deprived communities to fund their crimes.

Forty-six search warrants were executed as part of action to disrupt the gang, which resulted in large quantities of drugs, including cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, pills and herbal cannabis being seized.

More than £600,000 in cash and firearms, including a handgun, air weapon and a BB gun, were also recovered with ammunition from the addresses.

Alongside this enforcement activity, 11 children were safeguarded after officers identified they were at risk from the gang as part of their criminal activities. They were referred to partner agencies or passed into the care of family members.

Operation Begonia

Prostitution brings significant threat of risk and harm to both the people involved in on street and off street prostitution, and to local communities. People involved in

prostitution, most of whom are women, are particularly vulnerable to violence from individuals or through exploitation by organised crime gangs.

Operation Begonia, our new national approach to on street prostitution, targets areas where it remains an issue.

During Begonia patrols, our officers will speak with people involved in on street prostitution, to make sure they are safe, to ask if they need help and to signpost them to our local partners who can offer support.

Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhan Brown, joined our officers in Dundee on Tuesday, 29 April, to see Op Begonia in action.

We hope that this approach will be a first step to eventually supporting people to exit prostitution.

Begonia patrols, which are in addition to regular patrols, were piloted in Aberdeen and now operate in Glasgow and Dundee. As well as offering support to women, the patrols will tackle kerb crawling.

Prostitution is a form of violence against women and girls. Begonia enables officers to build trust and confidence in policing, while making communities safer and supporting victims.

Operation Buccal

A 33-year-old man was convicted of the murder of Maxine Clark at the High Court in Glasgow on Wednesday, 30 April.

Emergency services attended at 36-year-old Maxine Clark's home in the Riddrie area of Glasgow in June last year. She was found to have extensive injuries and was pronounced dead a short time later.

Subsequent enquiries resulted in Mark Keel being arrested and charged in connection with her death. Following his conviction, he is due to be sentenced later this month.

Officers received specialist support from the Digital Evidence Detection Dogs in this case. They carried out searches to locate Maxine's mobile phone, which played a key part of our investigation.

This was an extremely brutal and sustained attack and our thoughts remain with Maxine's family.

Road safety

We continue to focus on the safety of motorcyclists as part of our national campaign that runs from March until September.

I'm hugely grateful to Iain Dominick who powerfully shared the story of his son Ross, who tragically lost his life when he was riding his motorcycle in Glencoe in 2023 and was hit by a car at a junction.

As well as a clear call for road users to take another look and respect every person on the road, our officers continue to engage directly with motorcyclists.

This month, we had officers at the North West 200 motorcycle road race in Northern Ireland, using the opportunity to speak to bikers.

The popular event attracts around 150,000 spectators from the biking community with many travelling from Scotland or through Scotland to attend.

For the first time at the event, we were alongside police colleagues from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, working together to help motorcyclists and raise awareness of the main risks such as cornering left hand bends and overtaking.

Road policing remains a priority for Police Scotland, and we will continue to work very closely with a range of partners to improve road safety for all users. We all have a responsibility to use our roads safely and to help save lives.

Significant outcome – cannabis cultivation

At the High Court in Edinburgh on Wednesday, 23 April, 2025, 38-year-old Antonjo Selami was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for being concerned in the production of a controlled drug.

This follows two others who were sentenced in December for the same incident. Auriel Xhoka, 33, and Glendian Daci, 26, were each sentenced to three years and nine months.

It was on Sunday, 21 January, 2024, that officers acting on intelligence searched a disused retail unit in Greenock and discovered a cannabis cultivation worth up to £3.6 million.

The sophisticated set-up included a total of 6,000 plants in two large growing areas. Each area had irrigation, industrial heating and lighting units for the plants.

Uncovering a cultivation of this scale has a significant impact on the supply of cannabis onto Scotland's streets.

Police Scotland remains committed to the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce and the country's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, and our officers are determined to protect members of the public from this type of criminality.

Less crime

Tackling rural theft

More than a hundred officers from across Scotland have received new training as part of a nation-wide crackdown on rural crime. From Inverness to Dumfries, those working within rural and acquisitive crime have now been trained on VIN Chip technology, which aims to prevent and tackle thefts of agricultural machinery and equipment.

The VIN Chip system provides an individual forensic footprint to a piece of equipment or vehicle which can be scanned from distance using devices carried by police patrols and checks against registration databases to identify the owner and if it has been reported stolen. This allows roadside checks to be carried out quickly and stolen equipment to be recovered.

This year, 34 quad bikes, 13 trailers and 10 agricultural vehicles worth more than half a million pounds have been stolen from farms and rural premises across Scotland. It's part of wider efforts to encourage farmers to take preventative steps to discourage criminals who prey on the rural communities.

Shut Out Scammers

Doorstep crime can have a significant impact on those affected and can lead to victims isolating themselves to prevent being targeted further. To tackle these offences, Police Scotland supports the annual Trading Standards-led Shut Out Scammers campaign, which launched this year on Monday, 5 May.

With partners, we have been supporting a range of proactive engagement events to raise awareness of doorstep crime and what to look out for, should bogus workmen or rogue traders call at your home. We have also been providing the public with information aimed at preventing offences from occurring and advising communities on what they should do if they believe they've been approached by a doorstep criminal.

The campaign also sees us act on intelligence to carry out road checks on vehicles, speak with trade workers and pursue anyone believed to be committing bogus workmen offences.

We're grateful for the support of our Trading Standards partners as we work together to reduce the number of doorstep crimes occurring within Scotland.

Supported victims

Criminal justice services changes

We are beginning to see the benefits of a new process that allows officers to interview people at one of 129 police stations across Scotland, rather than custody centres.

This simple change to process for lower-level crimes has saved officers thousands of hours since it was introduced in November last year and has also reduced pressure on our custody centres.

The new summary case management process continues to roll out, most recently in Aberdeenshire, and is following the path of the Digital Evidence Sharing Capability which enables us to share evidence with COPFS efficiently and securely.

Officers are seeing a significant reduction in police and public witness citations, cases brought to court more quickly and an increase in early guilty pleas. These changes free up officers to spend more time carrying out their duties in our communities and provide resolution for victims and witnesses much more quickly.

These changes are the result of strong partnership working. I do recognise that we cannot make improvements to the criminal justice system in isolation and we need to play our part as well.

On Wednesday, 30 April, we brought together community justice partners to launch a new arrest referral process which enables referrals for individuals in police custody to support services such as substance use and mental health services. Our aim is to identify underlying causes of offending and make referrals with a view to reducing reoffending in our communities.

A thriving workforce

Officer recruitment

On Thursday, 15 May, we welcomed 68 new recruits who made their declaration of a constable at events at Police Scotland Headquarters, Tulliallan, the Scottish Police Training Centre in Jackton and in Aberdeen and Inverness, maintaining our officer establishment at over 16,500.

Chief officers and other senior leaders addressed the probationary officers, who will deploy to communities following their initial training.

Total pay and reward

Negotiations on pay agreements for 2025-26 are formally under way.

The Staff Side of the Police Negotiating Board for Scotland (PNBS) submitted its pay claim on Tuesday 1 April, 2025, seeking a 4.5% increase to all pay points and other significant changes to pay, terms and conditions.

On Tuesday, 15 April, 2025, trade unions UNISON and Unite the Union submitted the pay claim for police staff for financial year 2025/26. They are seeking a 7% increase to all pay points and other changes.

Pay and reward is rightly a focus for our workforce and I have committed to communicating proactively about our approach and progress on agreements.

Working with the Scottish Government and the Authority, we want to achieve a pay and reward agreement which is evidence based, affordable and which takes into account current and projected inflation and broader public sector pay, as well as terms and conditions.

Alongside pay, I want to ensure our total reward offer gives officers and staff the right support when they need it most.

In that regard, in April we introduced two key improvements to our family friendly leave provision are testament to that.

Colleagues can now receive neonatal leave of up to 12 weeks at full pay and up to two weeks' full paid leave if they have suffered a loss at any point during pregnancy.

Special Constable Conference

Between Friday, 9 May, and Sunday, 11 May, around 100 Special Constables gathered at Police Scotland Headquarters, Tulliallan, for their annual conference.

Deputy Chief Constable Jane Connors addressed delegates and I would underline my deep gratitude to our Special Constables, whose volunteering provides significant additional experience, skill and local knowledge to their deployments.

This last year alone Special Constables have delivered over 50,000 volunteering hours to support operational service delivery. I want to support our volunteers and to create more opportunities to encourage people to become Special Constables.

Victory in Europe Day

On Thursday, 8 May, Assistant Chief Constable Mark Sutherland represented Police Scotland at a Victory in Europe Day service hosted by the Lord Provost at Glasgow Cathedral.

Policing in Scotland has a long tradition of supporting our armed services and recruiting veterans, with 700 veterans across the service and over 200 officers and members of staff who are reservists.

The 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe is a significant moment in history that brought an end to the Second World War in Europe and a period of reflection for our communities. I would take this opportunity to recognise and thank our highly valued officers and staff with links to our armed forces for their service.

Engaging with our leaders

To improve how we engage with our workforce, in recent weeks and along with the wider Chief Officer Team, I've spoken directly with hundreds of officers and staff during senior and extended leaders' engagement sessions.

The in-person and online sessions focused on about how the Service is delivering our 2030 vision and how leaders can work collectively to bring colleagues on that journey of change with us.

We will be hosting more of these events, in various parts of the country, in the coming months to talk about the work we are doing to deliver safer communities, less crime, supported victims and a thriving workforce.

Strategic engagement

Association of Scottish Police Superintendents conference

This week, I will address delegates at the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents annual conference.

As part of the session, I will join a question and answer panel with Cabinet Secretary for Justice Angela Constance MSP, ASPSP President Chief Superintendent Rob Hay and HMICS Assistant Inspector Brian McNulty.

Our Superintending ranks are essential police leaders, playing key roles in delivering on the ambitions of our vision for safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce.

The conference, is an important opportunity to thank them for their contribution to policing in Scotland.

Investigatory Powers Commissioner

On Thursday, 15 May, I met with the Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC), the Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson, at Police Scotland Headquarters, Tulliallan.

The role of the IPC was created in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and came into full operation in November 2017 with the responsibility for reviewing the use of investigatory powers by public authorities, including Police Scotland.

The IPC and his office are a robust element of the broad scrutiny and governance arrangements which Police Scotland is subject to, and this was an important opportunity to discuss shared priorities and the evolving challenges around the use of investigatory powers. The Commissioner also provided insights from recent IPCO inspections, including discussions on thematic warrants and renewal applications.

Criminal Justice Committee cybercrime evidence session

On Wednesday 14 May, Assistant Chief Constable Stuart Houston took part in a roundtable evidence session on cybercrime with the National Crime Agency and the Criminal Justice Committee.

We continue to enhance our response to fraud and cybercrime, which continues to increase exponentially, almost doubling year on year.

In April, we established a specialist Cyber and Fraud Unit (CAFU) which will work alongside UK law enforcement and other agencies to tackle the growing demand of online crime in Scotland. It brings together around 260 specially trained police officers and staff from Cybercrime and the Serious Organised Crime Financial Investigation Unit, alongside officers and staff from the Cyber Harm Prevention Team, Policing in a Digital World Programme and Digital Forensics.

The new unit aims to enhance police response to fraud and cybercrime and better support victims through improved investigations, bespoke training for officers and staff and the latest technology. As a result, more than 500 officers have completed

new cryptocurrency and dark web training in the West and this training will be pushed into the North and East regions next month.

Live Facial Recognition event

Our National Conversation on Live Facial Recognition conference, held with the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner, in Edinburgh on 16 May highlighted the value the use of LFR can bring to policing and the underlying concerns people have of how it could be used.

The event brought together academics, Police Scotland officers and staff led by Assistant Chief Constable Steve Johnson, and broader policing colleagues, and human rights advocates, to discuss possibilities, concerns and potential solutions.

The outcomes from the national conversation and survey will be more fully detailed next month, along with our proposals for next steps.

Our commitment to listening, to carefully considering the implications of introducing LFR both legally and for our communities will remain at the forefront of the decision we may make.

Royal Company of Merchants of The City of Edinburgh

On Wednesday, 7 May, 2025, I addressed the Royal Company of Merchants of The City of Edinburgh, a charitable organisation for business and professional people dedicated to supporting the young and the elderly.

This was a positive engagement where I outlined policing reform in Scotland, the strengths of Police Scotland, and some key work in delivering our vision.

I was grateful to be invited to address the company by The Master, and former Scottish Police Authority Board member, Grant Macrae.

Best value audit

As previously reported, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Audit Scotland are conducting a best value audit of policing in Scotland.

Best value is about ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

On Friday, 9 May, HMICS and Audit Scotland published the audit scope, which outlines that the audit will assess how effectively the best value arrangements in the Authority (including Forensic Services) and Police Scotland are demonstrating continuous improvement in delivering the strategic policing priorities and overall vision, and transformation of policing services. The scope indicates that HMICS and Audit Scotland intend to publish the audit in early 2026.

As part of our response, we have undertaken a detailed self-assessment and submitted to auditors, and arrangements are in place to facilitate the audit.

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

On Friday, 16 May, I welcomed the Rt Hon Lady Elish Angiolini, as His Majesty The King's Lord High Commissioner, to Edinburgh, as part of the Ceremony of the Keys ahead of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, held from Saturday, 17 May to Thursday, 22 May 2025, at the Assembly Hall on the Mound, Edinburgh.