

Performance Against Local Policing Plan 2023-2026



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Caithness Area Committee Report Monday 28 April 2025

Reporting Period - 01 April 2024 – 31 March 2025



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 Caithness Area Committee Report, covering the reporting period 1 April 2024 until the 31 March 2025.

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. Housebreaking shows a rise; however, this is down to a single spree of crimes, which occurred outwith Caithness. 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 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 decrease, whilst detection rates remain 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



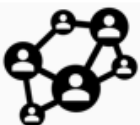
ACQUISITIVE CRIME

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

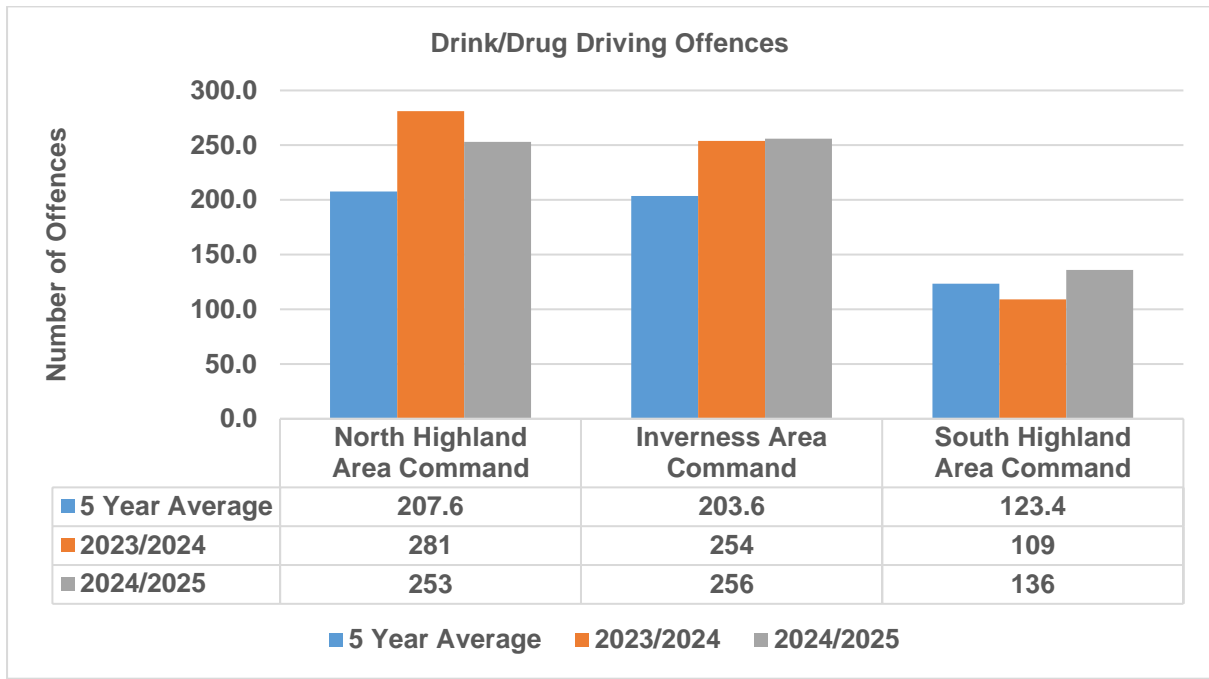
Road Safety and Road Crime

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	8.6	8.3	6	3	-3	
Drink/Drug Driving Offences	207.6	225.7	281	253	-28	89.7%
Speeding Offences	466.2	420.3	487	361	-126	99.7%

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	N/A
Assault	605.2	615.0	587	572	-15	71.3%
Serious Assault	31.2	28.7	29	43	14	93.0%
Drug (Possession) Offences	425.0	371.3	350	313	-37	101.3%

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)	37.8	36.3	39	55	16	9.1%
Fraud	143.6	171.3	168	178	10	14.0%
Theft by Shoplifting	190.6	215.0	353	212	-141	72.6%
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	38.8	39.3	48	30	-18	76.7%

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	47.6	48.7	47	64	17	26.7%
Domestic Crime*				502		65.7%
Hate Crime**				77		68.8%
Missing Persons		243.3	170	167	-3	

*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	68	58	-10
Cared for Adult	5	5	-
Care Experienced Young People	41	46	5
Child	56	58	2
Absconder/Wanted	0	0	-
Total	170	167	-3

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.

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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	31.4	25.7	37	48	11	52.1%

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	4742	4468	3922	3890	4178	4374
Group 1 - Non Sexual Crimes of Violence	481	388	379	489	519	564
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)	1	1	1	1	0	2
Attempted murder	0	7	1	3	5	4
Serious Assault (incl. FGM, culpable & reckless conduct - causing injury)	34	36	31	26	29	43
Common Assault (of an emergency worker)	109	103	113	98	98	104
Common Assault	602	579	645	613	587	572
Robbery (including assault with intent to rob)	3	6	9	4	11	4
Stalking	12	15	9	13	12	16
Cruel & Unnatural treatment of children	2	11	7	1	5	2
Threats and extortion	6	19	19	32	27	25
Other group 1 crimes	7	7	8	4	4	13
Group 2 - Sexual Offences	123	134	139	190	165	144
Rape	26	66	51	48	47	64
Attempted rape	2	1	2	1	2	0
Sexual assault	75	59	57	87	92	69
Crimes associated with Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent photos of children	8	16	11	17	13	18
Communicating indecently	17	20	17	20	12	16
Causing to view sexual activity or images	45	20	30	38	30	44
Threatening or Disclosure of intimate image*	16	8	12	7	10	14
Other Group 2 crimes	23	23	48	24	30	23
Group 3 - Crimes of Dishonesty	499	402	452	505	647	543
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - dwelling house	36	44	33	37	39	55
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - non-dwelling	23	11	10	8	9	13
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - other premises	33	25	26	32	36	16
Opening Lockfast Places - Motor Vehicle	9	6	3	2	2	6
Theft of a motor vehicle	44	32	34	36	48	30
Theft from a Motor Vehicle, Insecure etc	18	21	10	31	11	17
Attempt theft of motor vehicle	4	2	3	3	5	6
Opening Lockfast Places - NOT Motor Vehicle	25	11	15	22	27	10
Common theft	200	213	195	239	191	185
Theft by shoplifting	193	115	132	160	353	212

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Fraud	69	135	162	184	168	178
Other Group 3 crimes	32	46	34	45	21	39
Group 4 - Damage and Reckless Behaviour	240	259	290	252	283	285
Fireraising	33	26	15	28	18	32
Vandalism (incl. reckless damage, etc.)	642	535	587	636	516	453
Reckless conduct (with firearms)	0	0	2	0	0	1
Culpable & reckless conduct (not firearms)	21	39	24	21	15	27
Other Group 4 crimes	0	4	1	2	1	2
Group 5 - Crimes Against Society	464	471	389	302	309	337
Possession firearm/offensive weapon/knife in prison (not used in crime)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Possession offensive weapon/knife in school (not used in crime)	7	0	2	1	2	1
Possession offensive weapon/knife in a private place (not used in crime)	0	0	0	0	3	4
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife (not used in crime)	48	73	41	31	55	26
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	2	0	0
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife NEC (used in criminal activity)	22	38	23	38	43	27
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	14	10	9	5	9	2
Supply of drugs (incl. possession with intent)	35	45	19	21	37	48
Other drugs offences (incl. importation)	1	2	0	0	0	0
Possession of drugs	485	526	438	326	350	313
Offences relating to serious and organised crime	2	4	0	0	0	0
Bail offences (other than absconding)	120	122	128	149	123	124
Other crimes against public justice	138	175	145	148	161	156
Other crimes against society	3	2	2	0	1	1
Group 6 - Anti-Social Offences	339	221	292	287	255	286
Breach of the Peace	45	25	25	28	30	22
Threatening or abusive behaviour	398	411	453	449	474	403
Hate aggravated conduct (incl. stirring up hatred)	2	5	5	8	6	12
Drunk and incapable	2	1	0	1	0	0
Consume alcohol in designated place (local bye-laws)	11	2	5	1	11	11
Other alcohol related offences	16	7	5	10	11	8
Urinating	24	7	15	12	11	9
Group 7 - Miscellaneous Offences	78	94	73	88	82	97
Wildlife offences	10	15	9	20	16	3
Offences involved animals (not wildlife)	21	22	22	18	34	43
Community and public order offences	73	118	128	117	114	111
Environmental offences	13	14	16	4	6	2

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Licensing offences	21	25	27	30	27	29
Other misc. offences	3	1	3	0	4	16
Group 8 - Road Traffic Offences	2518	2549	1908	1777	1918	2118
Dangerous driving offences	68	72	102	75	78	87
Driving Carelessly	173	145	209	221	283	249
Driving under the influence	149	212	203	193	281	253
Speeding offences	500	570	424	350	487	361
Seat belt offences	57	33	40	30	85	58
Mobile phone offences	39	26	23	34	57	71
Unlawful use of motor vehicle	631	712	613	792	980	912
Vehicle defect offences	127	134	95	119	179	149
Drivers neglect of traffic directions (NOT pedestrian crossings)	18	18	10	24	43	24
Road Traffic Offences (involving bicycle/tricycle)	4	1	0	6	2	0
Other Group 8 Offences	236	186	209	236	267	304

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