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Agenda item	3
Report no	SCC/01/26

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Sutherland Area Committee

Date: 16/02/2026

Report Title: Police – Area Performance Report

Report By: Chief Inspector David McAlpine - 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 1 April 2025 – 31 December 2025.

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.

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

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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: 03/02/2026

Author: Chief Inspector David McAlpine

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Performance Against Local Policing Plan 2023-2026



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Keeping people safe
POILEAS ALBA

Sutherland Area Committee Report Monday 16th February 2026

Reporting Period - 01 April 2025 – 31 December 2025



Report by
Chief Inspector David McAlpine
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 David McAlpine

I present to you the Sutherland Area Report, covering the reporting period 1 April 2025 until the 31 December 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. We are not yet at a point where we can accurately compare year on year data as a result of the COVID pandemic, which does impact our 5 year data.

I am always happy to discuss the data and provide some context around the statistics provided within this report.

We continue to see real challenges within our communities in terms of cost of living, rural living may seem ideal to some but for others there is significant impact, including those who have not felt such hardship before. 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 evidences the continued drive we have undertaken to ensure our road network is as safe as possible. My team continue to engage with various partners to ensure the Highlands continues to be a safe and enjoyable place to drive.

You will be aware of the wider impact of fraud, which includes various fraudulent schemes. There is continuing effort to highlight how these crimes are being perpetrated to allow everyone to best protect themselves against this. The international nature of many of these crimes presents unique challenges to bringing perpetrators to justice.

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, particularly around county lines. 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.

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

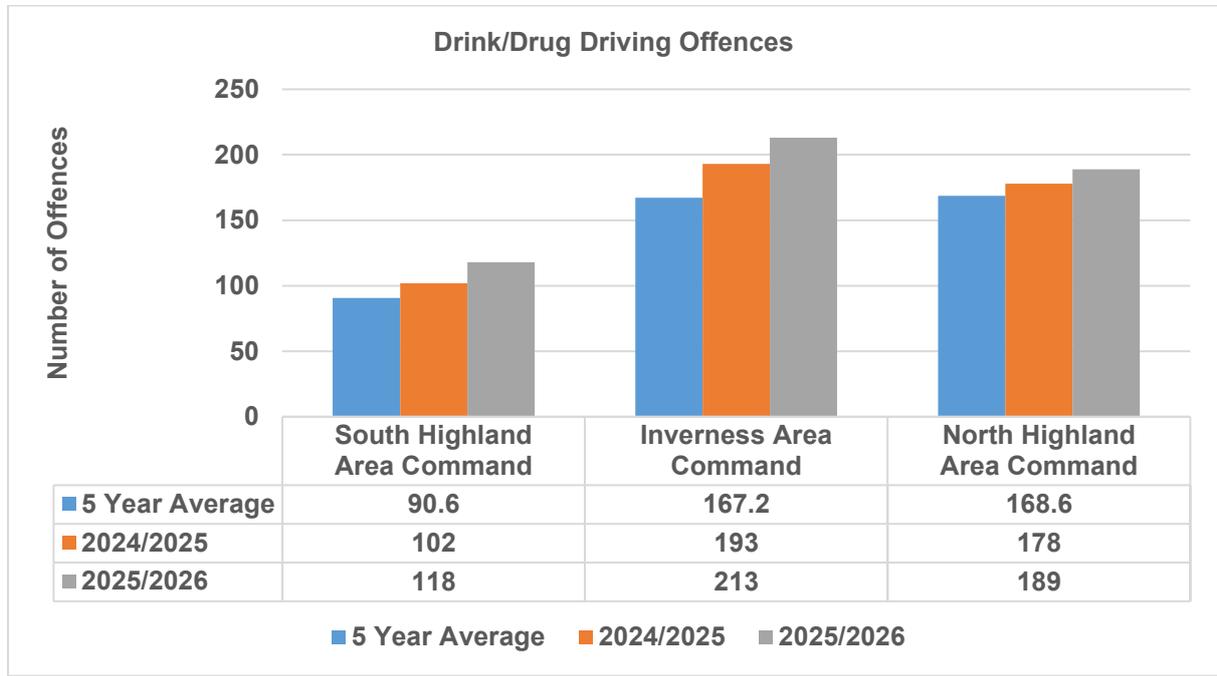
Road Safety and Road Crime

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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Number of Fatalities - Road Traffic Collisions	6.6	5	3	6	3	-
Drink/Drug Driving Offences	168.6	192	178	189	11	93.7%
Speeding Offences	262.6	194.6	166	258	92	100%

2025/2026 Drink/Drug Driving Offences -



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The North Road Policing Action Plan is forward facing and focusses on:

- Road patrol
- Influencing driver and road user behaviour
- Deterring and detecting criminality on our roads
- Combat the threat of terrorism.

Priority patrol locations are identified from collision analysis, speed / traffic survey data and intelligence products. We listen carefully to public / elected member concerns and process all information to shape our deployments. We aim to patrol the areas of greatest risk at the right time and undertake robust enforcement of road traffic legislation. This is reflected in the increased drink / drug driving and speeding detections highlighted above which evidences effective targeting of those who demonstrate risk taking behaviour. We have undertaken innovative patrols utilising an unmarked police HGV to target those who drive whilst using mobile phones.

We have worked alongside road safety partners such as DVLA, SEPA and Trading Standards during specific days of action aimed at interacting with those in the haulage / works industry.

We detected several county lines related drugs offences during targeted patrols aimed at disrupting those who use the road network to engage in criminal activity.

We carry out several preventative road safety initiatives aimed at engaging with vulnerable road users.

- Close Pass (cycle safety)
- Driver Engagement North (older driver engagement)
- New Driver Early Intervention (young driver inputs)
- Rider Refinement North (motorcycle safety)

Insp Donnie Mackinnon, Highland and Islands Road Policing.

**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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Murder	0.6	0.6	0	0	-	-
Assault	469.8	472.6	463	499	36	60.3%
Serious Assault	23	22	23	25	2	64%
Drug (Possession) Offences	301.2	250.6	226	246	20	79.7%

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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Housebreaking (Dwelling)	29.6	27	25	23	-2	34.8%
Fraud	122.2	123.3	122	130	8	16.9%
Theft by Shoplifting	144.6	206	140	202	62	77.2%
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	27.6	29	18	26	8	65.4%

Fraud: - The Highland and Islands continue to see an increase in Fraud offences with a continued increase visible across the year. We Continue to see several banking frauds, and more recently seen several frauds which have occurred due to e-mail interceptions/hacking. It would also appear that cryptocurrency related frauds are becoming more frequent. We are working nationally to review our approach to dealing with fraud type offences and continuing to engage with community groups particularly the elderly as a demographic particularly vulnerable to fraud type offences.

Theft by Shoplifting: - This year saw the launch of the National Retail Crime Task Force and operation LAMBIE within the Highland and Islands. This is a proactive, intelligence-led policing initiative designed to combat shoplifting across key retail areas in the Highlands. This operation deployed plain clothes police officers alongside uniform colleagues to conduct targeted patrols within identified problem premises.

Common Theft: The Highland and Islands has seen an increase in Common Theft in recent months, and we are also experiencing a rise in reported cooking oil thefts (Operation MITRIFORM). Another trend contributing to the increase in common thefts is Petrol Drive Offs, Scottish Crime Recording Standards are such that these are always raised as a crime until enquiry proves any genuine errors.

Detective Inspector Andy Bilton – North Acquisitive Crime Lead.

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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Rape	40.2	41	49	41	-8	61%
Domestic Crime*			397	449	52	67%
Hate Crime*			61	44	-17	75%
Missing Persons	153.8	121	132	93	-39	

*Please note, due to the different sources of data being used, and the different methodology/ counting rules, comparison of recorded domestic crimes & hate crime from 1st April 2024 with recorded domestic & 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	2024/2025	2025/2026	Variation
Adult	44	53	9
Cared for Adult	4	1	-3
Care Experienced Young People	33	16	-17
Child	51	23	-28
Absconder/Wanted	0	0	-
Total	132	93	-39

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 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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Drug (Supply) Offences	24.4	28	28	31	3	106.5%

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					
	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23	2023 /24	2024 /25	2025 /26
TOTAL CRIME & OFFENCES	4782	4502	4195	4648	4264	4655
Group 1 - Non Sexual Crimes of Violence	638	642	594	601	635	653
Murder (excluding culpable homicide at common law)	1	0	0	2	0	0
Culpable homicide (common law)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culpable homicide (other)	1	1	1	0	2	1
Attempted murder	6	0	2	5	2	4
Serious Assault (incl. FGM, culpable & reckless conduct - causing injury)	29	25	20	18	23	25
Common Assault (of an emergency worker)	91	84	75	72	85	55
Common Assault	476	497	457	456	463	499
Robbery (including assault with intent to rob)	5	5	3	8	3	8
Stalking	6	8	7	12	15	12
Cruel & Unnatural treatment of children	8	7	1	2	2	16
Threats and extortion	8	10	25	19	19	17
Other group 1 crimes	7	5	3	7	21	16
Group 2 - Sexual Offences	170	177	171	175	205	206
Rape	51	37	31	33	49	41
Attempted rape	1	0	0	0	0	3
Sexual assault	47	40	58	70	62	70
Crimes associated with Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent photos of children	15	10	14	11	17	13
Communicating indecently	17	12	17	7	15	17
Causing to view sexual activity or images	16	22	28	24	31	26
Threatening or Disclosure of intimate image*	5	11	5	5	10	13
Other Group 2 crimes	18	45	18	25	21	23
Group 3 - Crimes of Dishonesty	527	505	591	709	508	605
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - dwelling house	35	26	29	33	25	23
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - non-dwelling	10	6	7	9	8	8
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - other premises	22	18	24	29	12	13
Opening Lockfast Places - Motor Vehicle	2	2	1	2	2	4
Theft of a motor vehicle	27	29	21	43	18	26
Theft from a Motor Vehicle, Insecure etc	17	8	25	8	12	25
Attempt theft of motor vehicle	2	3	1	4	5	4
Opening Lockfast Places - NOT Motor Vehicle	11	11	16	24	8	11
Common theft	165	147	179	145	128	138
Theft by shoplifting	98	106	103	276	140	202
Fraud	97	126	148	118	122	130

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Other Group 3 crimes	41	23	37	18	28	21
Group 4 - Damage and Reckless Behaviour	466	456	537	425	406	395
Fireraising	19	11	26	17	28	17
Vandalism (incl. reckless damage, etc.)	413	425	497	394	357	362
Reckless conduct (with firearms)	0	2	0	0	1	0
Culpable & reckless conduct (not firearms)	33	17	14	14	19	16
Other Group 4 crimes	1	1	0	0	1	0
Group 5 - Crimes Against Society	803	615	555	623	514	577
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)	0	2	1	2	1	0
Possession offensive weapon/knife in a private place (not used in crime)	0	0	0	3	6	8
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife (not used in crime)	57	32	22	46	19	25
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	2	0	0	0
Possession offensive weapon/knife in a private place (used in criminal activity)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife NEC (used in criminal activity)	31	19	31	43	25	32
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	9	8	4	7	0	4
Supply of drugs (incl. possession with intent)	37	16	16	25	25	31
Other drugs offences (incl. importation)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of drugs	410	341	249	280	226	246
Offences relating to serious and organised crime	4	0	0	0	0	0
Bail offences (other than absconding)	98	98	118	96	92	124
Other crimes against public justice	153	97	112	121	116	106
Other crimes against society	2	2	0	0	0	1
Group 6 - Anti-Social Offences	368	403	396	421	357	353
Breach of the Peace	22	19	17	27	14	22
Threatening or abusive behaviour	330	360	351	367	314	308
Hate aggravated conduct (incl. stirring up hatred)	3	5	7	4	9	7
Drunk and incapable	1	0	1	0	0	0
Consume alcohol in designated place (local by-laws)	2	3	1	9	9	3
Other alcohol related offences	4	3	7	6	5	5
Urinating	6	13	12	8	6	8
Group 7 - Miscellaneous Offences	148	154	138	148	138	133
Wildlife offences	13	9	14	12	2	6
Offences involved animals (not wildlife)	15	16	15	28	28	30
Community and public order offences	88	91	82	86	77	75
Environmental offences	13	14	4	4	2	1

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Licensing offences	18	21	23	18	19	19
Other misc. offences	1	3	0	0	10	2
Group 8 - Road Traffic Offences	1662	1550	1213	1546	1501	1733
Dangerous driving offences	61	89	56	61	66	79
Driving Carelessly	123	155	132	155	143	219
Driving under the influence	164	157	135	209	178	189
Speeding offences	480	374	133	160	166	258
Seat belt offences	25	36	14	48	31	23
Mobile phone offences	21	22	11	22	31	69
Unlawful use of motor vehicle	507	467	486	569	567	541
Vehicle defect offences	114	76	73	96	87	116
Drivers neglect of traffic directions (NOT pedestrian crossings)	14	6	8	9	10	16
Road Traffic Offences (involving bicycle/tricycle)	1	0	3	2	0	2
Other Group 8 Offences	152	168	162	215	222	221

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