

Agenda item	4
Report no	SCC/20/26

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Sutherland Area Committee

Date: 24/08/2026

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 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

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.

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

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: 20/07/2026

Author: Chief Inspector David McAlpine

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Performance Against Local Policing Plan 2023-2026



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Sutherland County Area Committee Report Monday 31 August 2026

Reporting Period - 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



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 County Report, covering the reporting period 1 April 2025 until the 31 March 2026.

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.

Our focus remains on threat, risk and harm, with a strong emphasis on prevention, problem solving and proactive policing, aligned with the Chief Constable's priorities outlined in the Annual Police Plan.

Protecting vulnerable people in terms of Domestic Abuse is an absolute priority and our response to this type of crime is highly developed in terms of risk and victim focus. We can never become complacent and recognise that we need to continue to be proactive and the requirement to work closely with our partners in this preventative space.

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.

Road safety and road crime remains a key priority for the area, with continued proactive work ongoing to ensure our road network is as safe as possible. While we continue to see an increase in drink and drug driving offences, robust enforcement action is being taken to deter and detect this dangerous behaviour.

My team continue to engage with various partners to ensure the Highlands continues to be a safe and enjoyable place to drive.

Unfortunately, crimes of dishonesty have increased, particularly theft by shoplifting and fraud. My team are actively looking at preventative measures we can implement to drive this number down, highlighting how these crimes are being perpetrated to allow everyone to best protect themselves, whilst robustly investigating any crime of dishonesty reported to the police.

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.

We appreciate the continued support of the Sutherland County Area Committee. 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

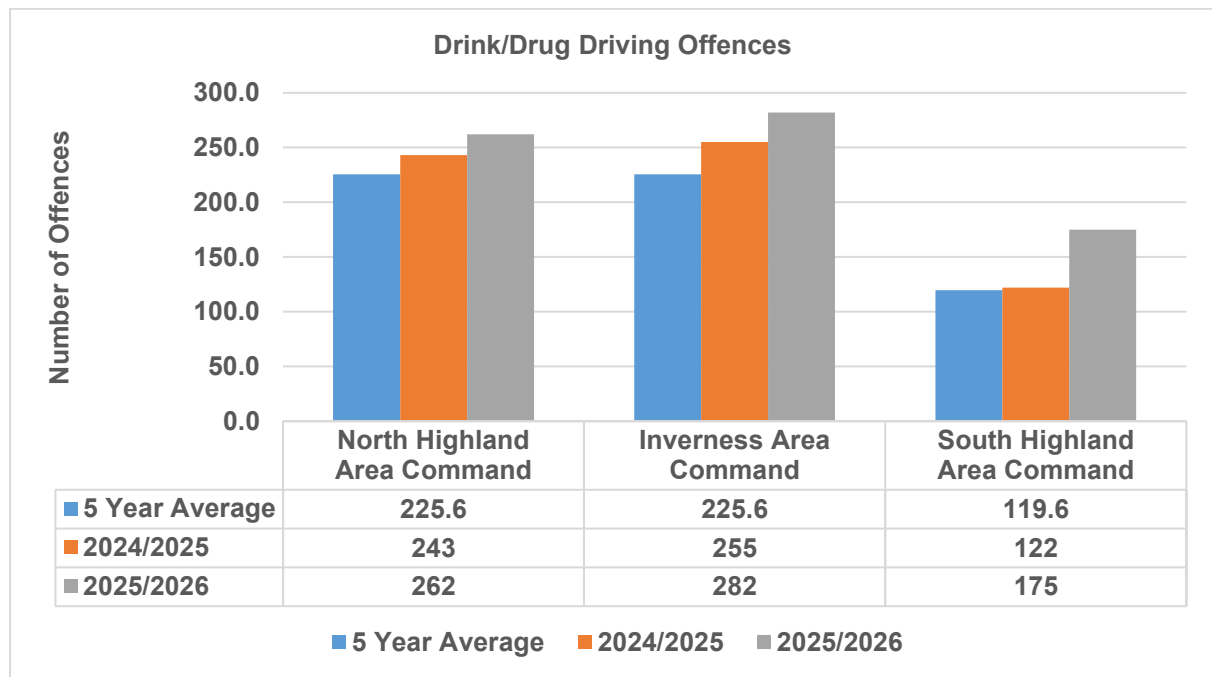
Road Safety and Road Crime

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	7.8	5	3	6	3	
Drink/Drug Driving Offences	225.6	237.7	243	262	19	89.3%
Speeding Offences	324.6	209.7	248	342	94	100.3%

2025/2026 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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Murder	0.6	0.7	0	1	1	100%
Assault	601.2	594	584	652	68	66.3%
Serious Assault	29.8	28	33	28	-5	75.7%
Drug (Possession) Offences	388.6	326.3	307	303	-4	85.5%

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)	41.8	44	55	30	-25	40%
Fraud	162.8	172.7	170	192	22	13.5%
Theft by Shoplifting	193	239.3	206	247	31	77.3%
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	35.6	37.3	17	30	13	62.5%

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 2024/2025	YTD 2025/2026	YTD Variation	Detection Rate
Rape	54.8	52.7	67	54	-13	51.9%
Domestic Crime*			510	570	60	67.16%
Hate Crime**			73	66	-7	77.3%
Missing Persons	205.2	155.3	167	129	38	

*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	2024/2025	2025/2026	Variation
Adult	58	70	12
Cared for Adult	5	2	-3
Care Experienced Young People	46	24	-22
Child	58	33	-15
Absconder/Wanted	0	0	0
Total	167	129	-38

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 unit

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	33.2	34	44	43	-1	107%

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	6061	5832	5608	6058	5855	6190
Group 1 - Non Sexual Crimes of Violence	821	872	829	821	853	886
Murder (excluding culpable homicide at common law)	1	0	0	2	0	1
Culpable homicide (common law)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culpable homicide (other)	1	1	1	0	2	2
Attempted murder	7	1	3	5	4	5
Serious Assault (incl. FGM, culpable & reckless conduct - causing injury)	36	31	26	23	33	28
Common Assault (of an emergency worker)	103	113	98	98	104	76
Common Assault	579	645	612	586	584	652
Robbery (including assault with intent to rob)	6	9	4	11	4	9
Stalking	15	9	13	13	16	14
Cruel & Unnatural treatment of children	11	7	1	5	3	22
Threats and extortion	19	19	32	27	23	20
Other group 1 crimes	7	8	4	10	24	18
Group 2 - Sexual Offences	212	228	241	235	251	276
Rape	65	51	46	45	67	54
Attempted rape	1	2	1	2	1	4
Sexual assault	59	57	88	93	74	94
Crimes associated with Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent photos of children	16	11	17	13	18	20
Communicating indecently	20	17	20	12	16	21
Causing to view sexual activity or images	20	30	38	30	37	38
Threatening or Disclosure of intimate image*	8	12	7	10	15	18
Other Group 2 crimes	23	48	24	30	23	27
Group 3 - Crimes of Dishonesty	661	656	796	898	747	812
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - dwelling house	44	33	37	40	55	30
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - non-dwelling	11	10	8	9	11	15
Housebreaking (incl. attempts) - other premises	25	26	32	34	20	14
Opening Lockfast Places - Motor Vehicle	6	3	2	2	6	5
Theft of a motor vehicle	32	34	35	48	29	32
Theft from a Motor Vehicle, Insecure etc	21	10	31	11	17	30
Attempt theft of motor vehicle	2	3	3	5	7	4
Opening Lockfast Places - NOT Motor Vehicle	11	15	22	24	9	17
Common theft	213	195	239	186	179	195
Theft by shoplifting	115	132	160	352	206	247

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Fraud	135	161	182	166	170	192
Other Group 3 crimes	46	34	45	21	38	31
Group 4 - Damage and Reckless Behaviour	607	629	684	550	516	529
Fireraising	26	15	29	18	32	21
Vandalism (incl. reckless damage, etc.)	535	587	634	518	456	482
Reckless conduct (with firearms)	0	2	0	0	1	0
Culpable & reckless conduct (not firearms)	39	24	21	14	26	26
Other Group 4 crimes	4	1	0	0	1	0
Group 5 - Crimes Against Society	997	807	720	777	688	733
Possession firearm/offensive weapon/knife in prison (not used in crime)	0	0	0	1	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	9
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife (not used in crime)	73	41	31	53	25	34
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
Other possession of offensive weapon/knife NEC (used in criminal activity)	38	23	39	45	28	39
Production, manufacture or cultivation of drugs	10	9	5	9	2	5
Supply of drugs (incl. possession with intent)	45	19	21	37	44	43
Other drugs offences (incl. importation)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of drugs	526	438	324	348	307	303
Offences relating to serious and organised crime	4	0	0	0	0	0
Bail offences (other than absconding)	122	128	149	120	121	152
Other crimes against public justice	175	145	148	158	152	147
Other crimes against society	2	2	0	1	1	1
Group 6 - Anti-Social Offences	458	507	508	541	456	481
Breach of the Peace	25	25	28	30	22	27
Threatening or abusive behaviour	411	452	448	473	394	424
Hate aggravated conduct (incl. stirring up hatred)	5	5	8	6	12	9
Drunk and incapable	1	0	1	0	0	0
Consume alcohol in designated place (local bye-laws)	2	5	1	11	11	4
Other alcohol related offences	7	5	10	11	8	7
Urinating	7	15	12	10	9	10
Group 7 - Miscellaneous Offences	195	205	187	199	193	192
Wildlife offences	15	9	19	15	1	9
Offences involved animals (not wildlife)	22	22	18	34	38	40
Community and public order offences	118	128	117	114	108	111
Environmental offences	14	16	3	6	3	2

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Licensing offences	25	27	30	27	28	28
Other misc. offences	1	3	0	3	15	2
Group 8 - Road Traffic Offences	2113	1928	1643	2037	2151	2281
Dangerous driving offences	72	102	74	78	89	96
Driving Carelessly	145	209	164	195	211	280
Driving under the influence	212	203	190	280	243	262
Speeding offences	570	424	168	213	248	342
Seat belt offences	33	40	20	52	43	37
Mobile phone offences	26	23	14	29	50	77
Unlawful use of motor vehicle	716	613	680	784	817	714
Vehicle defect offences	134	95	87	124	132	176
Drivers neglect of traffic directions (NOT pedestrian crossings)	18	10	16	17	18	24
Road Traffic Offences (involving bicycle/tricycle)	1	0	6	2	0	2
Other Group 8 Offences	186	209	224	263	300	271

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