

**Perth and Kinross Council Community Safety Committee**

**4 December 2013**

**Report by Chief Inspector Whitford, Perth and Kinross Local Policing Area,  
Police Scotland, D Division**

**POLICE AND FIRE REFORM: LOCAL SCRUTINY AND ENGAGEMENT**

**OPERATIONAL REPORT PART 1 – December 2013**

**The attached report provides members with background operational information to the performance information submitted separately to provide context.**

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that members note and question the operational report.

**2 BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this report is to elaborate on some of the police work which has taken place within the Perth & Kinross Local Policing Area. The theme of this report is the impact of travelling and organised criminals on Perth and Kinross.

**3 COMMUNITY ISSUES**

**3.1 Housebreaking**

The affluent area of Perth and Kinross remains an attractive target for travelling criminals from other areas. During a series of housebreakings in July and August there were around 20 residential crimes in the Crieff and Comrie area, where houses were broken into, causing significant impact on those families.

Local police officers working with residents and businesses were able to identify a suspect and vehicle from Glasgow. Officers from Crieff, supported by Glasgow colleagues, had a day of action and recovered property from the houses and traced the suspect.

### 3.2 Other Crime

Crimes such as the series of housebreakings mentioned above are also being committed by criminals who are part of organised crime gangs; they are very efficient and 'professional' in what they do, making them particularly difficult to catch. At this time, these gangs are operating across rural Scotland

Perth and Kinross is being targeted by a number of different groups who have differing interests and approaches to crime. Farms across the area are being targeted by organised criminals who focus on quad bikes and tools. Even when valuable quad bikes are stored in secure sheds, the thieves are able to break most locks and padlocks and wheel away the quad bikes without anyone being aware of them.

Other groups are targeting high value cars. They break into houses in order simply to steal the ignition keys and then the car. At this time there have been a number of such crimes across Perthshire South, Perth and the Forth Valley.

A very worrying type of crime has been the targeting of copper power cables. The thieves have sufficient skills and knowledge to climb up poles and cut away earthing wires and power cables, putting themselves and the public at significant risk. In one recent theft, as a result of their actions, a house caught fire and had to be evacuated in the middle of the night. In this instance, the thieves were caught after continuing on to steal cabling from a number of isolated rural sites across Perth and Kinross.

Organised gangs are also targeting, storage and vehicle tanks for diesel and heating oil and recently Perth and Kinross has suffered a number of instances of sheep rustling.

To catch these criminals, we need the support of communities. Because of the rural locations, these crimes will always involve vehicles and the best hope of catching them in the act is for members of the public to write down the number plates of any suspicious vehicles and report them to the police.

Another dark side of organised crime is violence and threats of violence. The Licensed Trade has always been an easy target for such criminals; once established in a town or city, their businesses can be run as legitimate fronts for significant criminal activity. They use violence and threats of violence to stop those who may be against them including other legitimate businesses who are in competition. Such criminals will also attempt to corrupt local professionals such as accountants and lawyers or public officials in order to ensure their activities are hidden from scrutiny.

Perth has not been exempt from this and recently organised criminals have been trying to gain a foothold in Perth. Police Scotland has been working with partners and the licensed trade to make Perth a very difficult place for such criminals to operate. Being a single force, considerable leverage through intelligence, contacts and experience in the major Scottish cities have come to bear and we have had a lot of success in stopping such criminality.

These types of crime investigations require a lot of time, work and resources which are not always readily available at a very local level and as such a new Community Investigation Unit (CIU) has been formed to investigate such criminals. During October the CIU executed eleven search warrants, detected 73 crimes including 21 domestic housebreakings, recovering property and cash.

### **3.3 Prostitution**

Prostitution is a universal type of crime, involving the exploitation of extremely vulnerable people by local, national and international gangs and groups. Victims get drawn into this type of criminality in some instances voluntarily, through poverty and debt or the need to service a drugs habit. Others are drawn in involuntarily, trafficked into the UK and forced to work under threats of violence against themselves and/or their families in their home country.

Prostitution occurs 'on street' in areas known as red light areas and off street within brothels, private homes or other premises posing as legitimate businesses, such as massage parlours etc. Perth does not have 'on street' prostitution, or 'front' businesses such as in other major Scottish cities; however it does have a number of premises which operate as brothels.

The majority of brothels operating in Perth involve women working singly in flats; operating for a week, before moving onto other similar flats across the UK. The victims and the chains of flats are managed by organised crime gangs, who take the profits and ensure the victims comply. It is a desperate existence for the victims, who are being exploited by the gangs and those that use their services.

Perth community officers have been working for a number of months to identify how many such brothels are operating in Perth and are working with detectives to target those that are exploiting and profiting from this type of crime.

## **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

## **5 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no staffing issues as a result of this report.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

This report does not have any impact on the environment.

## **7 SUMMARY**

The attached report updates members regarding significant operational matters and gives context to the performance of the local policing area.

## **8 COMPLIANCE**

Is the proposal;

- |     |                                  |     |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| (a) | Human Rights Act 1998 compliant? | YES |
| (b) | Equality & Diversity compliant?  | YES |