

Crime continues to fall in the capital

✖ Following this week's report on the conviction of three men following the recovery of Edinburgh's largest ever drugs haul from a house in Sighthill, The Edinburgh Reporter examines the performance of Lothian and Borders Police ahead of next year's amalgamation which will signal the end of the force after 37 years.

In his penultimate annual report published last month, Chief Constable David Strang conveyed some good news to the capital's citizens. Overall recorded crime fell by 5%, including a 6% reduction in violent crime, an 11% drop in break-ins and thefts from homes, and an overall reduction of 5% in crimes of dishonesty.

He claimed that these results can be attributed to a number of positive factors such as the force's continued work with partners, the opportunity to build upon existing good practice, and listening to and addressing the concerns of all of our communities.

His report contains details of various initiatives and operations carried out by his officers, including those which resulted in this week's court case, as well as a number of high profile events which stretched the force to the limit.

One example was Operation Accessible, which targeted thefts from homes throughout the city, and resulted in 37 arrests. These raids followed seven months of police activity, during which officers recovered around £200,000 worth of stolen goods, and £3,000 worth of controlled drugs.

A domestic abuse pilot, which began last year, means that anyone accused of domestic abuse in the south or east of the city will now be dealt with by a specially dedicated court. An

infrastructure has been developed to support victims through court proceedings to help them get a positive outcome at the end of the process. Early indications show there has been a positive impact for victims.

The School Link Officer project was recently expanded, and now 11 police officers are dedicated to covering all 23 state secondary schools in the area. Strang says that feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

In October 2011 the Force developed a new approach to the investigation of major crime with the creation of the Major Investigation Team (MIT). This dedicated unit was created to increase consistency and efficiency in the investigation of serious incidents. The murder of a Polish man, in Leith in January 2012 provided considerable challenges for the team, not only in the investigation but also in the significant impact felt by the local community. The MIT worked closely with community officers and the Force's Diversity Unit to ensure there was significant engagement with Edinburgh's Eastern European communities, as well as local churches, support groups and the Polish Consulate. Polish speaking police officers contributed significantly to the investigation to ensure that language and cultural differences were minimised and local intelligence information could be gathered. This, combined with considerable media interest in both Britain and Poland, resulted in a 26 year-old man being arrested quickly.

In November 2011 the Serious and Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) was formed to provide a specialist investigative response into significant crime groups working in the Force area. The unit works in partnership with local authorities, non-government organisations and other law enforcement agencies to target, disrupt and detect those involved in criminality, and to divert and deter persons who are at risk of becoming involved in organised crime. The SOCU also investigates crimes involving human trafficking, the sex industry and security

industry offences. Since November the unit has recovered over £1 million worth of class A and class B drugs, as well as several firearms and associated ammunition, and a number of high profile serious organised crime group members have been arrested. Over £63,700 of criminal cash has been seized and three victims of human trafficking offences have been rescued. A number of offenders have also been reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

‘Made from Crime?’ is one of the largest force-wide initiatives ever run by Lothian and Borders Police. The campaign was designed to tap into local knowledge and encourage communities to report their suspicions about people they thought might be making money illegally through crime. It was launched at the Money Museum in Edinburgh in August 2011 by Assistant Chief Constable Iain Livingstone, the Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill and the Solicitor-General for Scotland, Lesley Thomson. Following a successful intelligence-gathering phase throughout the summer involving traditional marketing channels combined with new and innovative methods such as Facebook, the Force conducted a significant 48-hour enforcement operation in November 2011.

This was designed to show communities that Lothian and Borders Police will act on information received. Over £450,000 worth of cash was seized from suspected criminals while £6.5 million worth of assets were reported for seizure. The campaign has received recognition through national communications awards for its innovative and thought-provoking approach.

‘Cut Out Metal Theft’ was a campaign launched by the Force to target carriers and dealers of stolen scrap metal and to detect, investigate and deter metal theft. Radio adverts, posters, leaflets and postcards were created to raise public awareness and urge people to report anything suspicious. A national day of action saw more than 500 vehicles stopped and searched and 24 scrap metal dealers inspected.

Edinburgh continues to be a key location for high profile events and the city was given the honour of staging the UK National Armed Forces Day in 2011. The event was a huge success with over 80,000 people attending, along with members of the Royal Family. In addition, among the several hundred events Lothian and Borders Police were involved in last year was the high profile wedding of Zara Phillips to Mike Tindall. A huge planning structure was put in place over many months, and on the day itself, more than 1,000 police officers and staff worked to ensure it was a resounding success that showcased Scotland's capital as a safe, dynamic and exciting city.



Tian Tian

One of the most unusual events that Lothian and Borders Police was involved in was the arrival of our pandas, Tian Tian and Yang Guang, to Edinburgh Zoo in December 2011. The eyes and ears of the world were again focused on the Capital, with over one billion people watching as our police motorcycles escorted the lorry carrying the animals from Edinburgh Airport to their new home at Edinburgh Zoo.

During the year, the number of police officers in the force increased by 41 from 3025 to 3066. The number of women officers increased by 29 from 754 to 783. The number of Minority Ethnic officers remained at 44, while officers with a disability reduced from 78 to 75. The number of lesbian, gay and transgender officers increased by 4 from 49 to 53

Chief Constable Strang concluded:- “Despite continued financial pressure and uncertainty over restructuring on a national level, we have continued to work with our partners to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour at a local level. We have focused on increasing community reassurance through closer partnership working, listening to people's concerns and

responding accordingly.

“I would like to thank my officers and staff for their continued efforts over the past year. They, along with the support of our partners and the Police Board, have ensured that we will continue to deliver the best possible service as we move towards a new era in Scottish policing.”