

VIDEO – Meeting Police Scotland's Divisional Commander for Edinburgh



The officer tasked with overseeing the transition from Lothian and Borders Police to Police Scotland has spoken to The Edinburgh Reporter of his pride at being named the new Divisional Commander with responsibility for the policing of the City of Edinburgh.

On his first day at his new office, Chief Superintendent Mark Williams took time out of his busy schedule to outline his determination to provide a professional service to the residents of the capital, and highlighted public safety as his number one priority, vowing to target those who engage in criminal behaviour.

Mr Williams will be working from St Leonards, a station he knows well having started as a constable on the beat twenty years ago, rather than the current headquarters at Fettes.

As of 1 April 2013, Lothian and Borders Police will no longer exist, but will instead become part of Police Scotland, a single force which will cover the whole country. This will be the biggest change to policing since amalgamation in 1975, but Chief Supt Williams insisted that members of the public would be unlikely to witness any immediate changes.

Although the old Lothian and Borders logo will be replaced by that of Police Scotland; the rebranding of uniforms and vehicles will be a gradual one.

The many community officers who respond to local problems and have built up knowledge of their respective areas will remain

in post, however they will be supported by a number of new units, specialising in the investigation into certain types of crime.

An Alcohol and Violence Reduction Unit will provide a physical front line policing team which will be based at the West End Police Station in Torphichen Place near Haymarket, but will have a force wide responsibility, as will the Domestic Abuse Unit, which will initially be housed in the Gyle, although plans are on-going to move to a more accessible station in the future.

This unit will target perpetrators of domestic abuse, a subject which Mr Williams was particularly keen to highlight, insisting that the victims deserve the protection of the police and that the abusers will have no hiding place.

A new Sexual Offences Unit will oversee all rape cases and those involving other sexual crimes, providing a dedicated professional approach from officers experienced in the investigations of such matters, whilst a Community Investigation Unit will pro-actively target other crimes such as housebreaking.

The Roads Policing Unit will operate throughout the city and be responsible to Mr Williams who can deploy the specially trained officers appropriately to target driver behaviour and make the roads as safe as possible. A National Trunks Roads Policing Unit will patrol the motorways and dual carriageways such as the M8, M90 and City Bypass.

Mr Williams was keen to point out that Lothian and Borders Police had always focussed on these crimes, however he hoped that the restructuring would allow a real focus and provide a renewed vigour to make serious inroads to the problems.

He accepts that he will be held accountable by the people of Edinburgh as to how well his officers have performed and looks forward to the scrutiny, and also providing transparency,

claiming that the public have a right to know such details.

A Policing Plan for the capital will be published later this month, and the force priorities will mirror the finding of a recent survey of 3000 residents throughout the community. One thousand people responded to an on-line survey, whilst 1800 were questioned face to face on the street. Two hundred members of the business community also took part.

The subjects identified from the survey include personal safety, anti-social behaviour, road safety, drugs and alcohol abuse and serious and organised crime.

Here is the video we made at St Leonard's Police Station featuring interviews with both Chief Superintendent Williams and Superintendent Matt Richards