

Police launch car crime operation in North Edinburgh



Police Scotland have launched an operation against car and vehicle theft across the country today. They chose to do so in North Edinburgh, sadly appropriate as this area is responsible for a third of the car crime statistics in the capital.

Assistant Chief Constable Campbell Thomson of Police Scotland launched Operation Quarterlight at Drylaw Police Station early this morning following which The Edinburgh Reporter went out with a group of uniform and plain clothes officers to apprehend criminals already known to the police, who had either breached bail conditions or were wanted in connection with other crimes.

Police Scotland is targeting car crime and vehicle theft for two main reasons. It takes up a great deal of police time but is also affecting the public. Since November last year more than 70 vehicles a week have been stolen across the country and more than 230 vehicles are broken into and items stolen. In Edinburgh around 3,000 vehicles have been stolen since last April.

Working with local communities and partners, Police Scotland has identified vehicle-related crime as an increasing challenge, and in the same way as the housebreaking initiative which began last year, Edinburgh Police will now concentrate on this type of offender for a time.

A number of teams went out from Drylaw Police Station just after 9am in marked and unmarked police cars, but the police had already made one arrest overnight of a young man who is now en route to secure accommodation having committed dozens

of offences across the north of the city.

This is not a flash in the pan. The police are determined it will be a real focus over a period of time in Edinburgh.



Chief Superintendent Mark Williams

Chief Superintendent Mark Williams, Edinburgh Divisional Commander, is keen to warn members of the public to change their habits in relation to their vehicles, including ensuring valuables are removed from cars, that vehicles are locked, and keeping car keys out of sight in their homes to make them more difficult to find in the event their house is broken into.

He said: "I would advise that you don't keep your car keys and house keys together as this makes them more vulnerable and accessible to criminals. Keep them out of sight. If the public can be encouraged to do that then this along with the police action which will be sustained over the next few weeks should result in reducing crime rates.

"There is a small number of offenders who commit this crime time and time again. The police know of about 15 in North Edinburgh who commit this type of offence. They have frequent dealings with the police for vehicle theft and other crimes. The criminals vary in age but there is a close knit community here and this group of young men (and they are typically young men) do know each other and often commit crimes together. The public can give us information anonymously through Crimestoppers but in the case of an emergency then they should be encouraged to dial 999.

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Motorbike thefts have been very prevalent in this area, and often feature on the Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse (TRIM) [Facebook](#) page.

Chief Superintendent Williams continued: "There have been a number of young offenders here and in the east of the city who steal motorbikes and then drive them along the streets or on paths and we have concerns about public safety, but also the safety of the offender. We do not want anyone to be injured as a result of these motorbike thefts.

"Any member of the public who owns a motorbike would be well advised to lock it up. We have discovered bikes which were not locked although they were in a hut or shed."

A lot of today's work was a result of intelligence or DNA based evidence at crime scenes and the police are looking to make several arrests before the day is out.

The #StrongerNorth project has brought together many agencies such as the police, council, Crown Office and the third sector who can work together more effectively to combat crime and improve the area.

Finally Chief Superintendent Williams concluded : "The application of bail curfews or tagging can be very effective. If those measures do not stop the individual from offending then we can as a last resort take them to secure accommodation which is what happened in North Edinburgh last night with a young man who continued to offend despite all of the measures put in place to stop him."

Councillor Cammy Day leads on community safety but is also the local councillor. He is pleased to support the operation. He told The Edinburgh Reporter: "It will not only bring more police officers to North Edinburgh but also the resource and intelligence to help with the #strongernorth initiative.

"I think the crime statistics make it appropriate to launch the operation here. It is not only about this launch today, but the work the council does will all the partner agencies to try and prevent crime in future.

“All the agencies support young people and their families to get out of the cycle of criminal activity.”

One local resident told The Edinburgh Reporter: “It’s great to see Police Scotland targeting houses in West Pilton this morning, but we now need to hope that the courts will back up the good police work and jail those individuals who are repeat offenders.

“It is the minority who are turning North Edinburgh in to a area where people are scared to leave their homes.”