

WEST LOTHIAN: Police take £1m of drugs off the street

A police crackdown has seen almost £1m worth of drugs seized and a 'multi-million' pound illegal tobacco operation shut down.

Police officers revealed the results of what has been branded 'Operation Wingman' to the latest round of Local Area Committees held by West Lothian Council.

Councillors heard that in the last three months alone £190,000 worth of drugs were seized following police raids in Livingston and West Calder.

Police have also scored success against organised gangs dealing in illegal tobacco production.

Speaking to Linlithgow Local Area Committee this week Constable Fiona Bell said: "West Lothian Pro-active Crime Team continue to develop and carry out enforcement on members of organised crime groups based in West Lothian (Operation Wingman) that are involved in the supply of controlled drugs.

"By the end of Quarter 4, [January to March] Operation Wingman had removed over £957,000 worth of drugs from West Lothian streets, along with over £136,000 in cash and numerous items linked to proceeds of crime."

PC Bell added: "Drugs supply has a close link to Organised Crime Groups (OCG), and is a blight on any community. We focus on those who bring harm to our communities, and particularly those who are involved in drugs supply, cultivation/production

and the sale and distribution in particular, but not exclusively, of Class A drugs.

“During January, community intelligence in relation to Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences, led officers to several linked addresses within Livingston and West Calder. During the investigation, a 26-year-old male was identified and thereafter charged with 7 charges, including MDA offences, theft of electricity and culpable and reckless conduct. Value of drugs seized is approximately £190,000.”

Police have also been working with officers in Edinburgh to tackle the illegal trade in counterfeit tobacco products and the Area Committee report also detailed the discovery of an illegal tobacco production plant in West Lothian.

It highlighted: “Again during January, Pro-active Team officers conducted a joint operation with HRMC in relation to an industrial scale illegal tobacco production within a business park in West Lothian.

“During enquiries, five Edinburgh people were arrested and charged with customs offences. Due to the size of the equipment and the subsequent follow-on testing required by HRMC, a final figure is unavailable at this time although they have stated that this was a multi-million pound operation and one that has never before been seen in Scotland.”

Police have also been working in schools to educate teachers and pupils about drugs related behaviours – including ‘Cuckooing’ where criminals take over a vulnerable person’s home to deal drugs from, and County Lines gangs where vulnerable youngsters are lured by gangs to sell drugs for them.

The report added: “County Lines and Cuckooing input was delivered to West Lothian schools Well-being Teacher Champs meeting during last quarter. County Lines and Cuckooing has a significant negative impact on young and vulnerable people

across the country and the input is designed for those working with young and vulnerable people to spot the signs of behaviour related to these crimes and provide suitable intervention to those at risk.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter

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