

# Digital dogs helping Police Scotland catch criminals

**New specially trained police “digi” sniffer dogs have helped collar a criminal in possession of child sex abuse material, and also searched out a murder victim’s phone.**

Police Scotland’s pack of Digital Forensic Dogs – Digital Dogs – are now fully operational.

And they are notching a “daily” string of successes including unearthing an air tag relating to a domestic stalking crime in Edinburgh.

The four-legged sleuths have also discovered a USB device in Aberdeen which contained child sex abuse material, and a murder victim’s phone in Glasgow.

The latest canine crime fighting recruits are specially trained to detect digital gadgets such as smartphones, laptops and tiny SIM cards being deliberately hidden to avoid detection by police.

Police chiefs have unleashed the pooch detectives to help sniff out digital clues and lead to more convictions for criminals involved in cyber crime and online child abuse.

The dogs have been deployed operationally following intensive training and include Zen, a rescue Springer Spaniel and Xena, a Springer Spaniel/Labrador cross.

They also include Max, a Sprocker gifted by the previous

owners who wanted him to have an active home; Pip, a Malinois/Australian Shepherd Cross, gifted by a member of the public; and Willow, a Labrador.

They have been working with three specialist handlers and are deployed on a national basis covering all of Scotland.

Police Scotland said: "Police Scotland's Digital Forensic Dogs are now fully deployed and working well with the teams.

"The dogs have proven to be highly successful, consistently performing well and achieving results almost daily by locating digital devices.

"Some examples include a Digital Dog uncovering a USB device in the Aberdeen area which was found to contain child sexual abuse material, in the Edinburgh area an air tag for a domestic stalking crime and in Glasgow a murder victim's phone."

Assistant Chief Constable Andy Freeburn has said it is now very common for digital devices to be used in criminal activity and concealed by criminals to hide incriminating evidence.

He said: "People and businesses are spending more and more time online and criminals will use any means available to them to exploit vulnerabilities and any method at their disposal. Digital devices are becoming smaller in size and those involved in criminal activity are becoming more adept at hiding them.

"Searches by humans can be limited and the dogs will provide an additional capability which make finding hidden devices easier.

"Police Scotland is committed to keeping everyone safe and this addition to our search capabilities will ensure there is no hiding place for criminals, even in the digital world."

The Digital Evidence Detection Dogs search capability is an additional resource and complementary to Police Scotland's existing canine resources including those dogs that can currently search for drugs, explosives, cash, firearms, human remains and blood.