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Inverness Area Command

Newsletter – April 2024

Introduction:

We are pleased to present the latest edition of our community newsletter, designed to keep you up to date about the activities and initiatives of our local police officers. This newsletter serves as your window into the ongoing work of officers in your area, featuring insights from the City Centre Policing Team and the Community Beats team.

Our goal is to provide you with a closer look at the dedicated efforts of our police officers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your communities. We understand the importance of keeping our community members informed and appreciate your continued support as we work together to make our streets even safer and more welcoming.

Thank you for being engaged and informed members of our community. Together we can continue to create a better and safer place for all.

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Community Beats Team

Your community beat team and their areas of responsibility:

Inspector David Mcalpine: Team leader of City Centre Policing Team (CCPT) and Community Beats (CB)



PC Keith Whitelaw: Community officer for; **Merkinch and South Kessock.**



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PC Katie Johnstone: Community officer for; **Dalneigh, Torvean, Bught, Scorguie & Kinmylies**



PC Cailean Macleod: Community officer for; **Hilton, Holm, Lochardil, Culduthel and Inshes**



Road Safety

Over the course of this period speeding has remained a constant issue in several areas. As such beat officers have endeavoured to perform radar checks to not only charge offenders but also to deter this from occurring. As ever we would encourage community councils to advise of areas that cause concern regarding consistent speeding.

Anti-social behaviour & Disorder

Anti-social behaviour with communities continue to present challenges for the community beats team however are keen to be informed of areas in the city that are affected by behaviour as we are acutely aware of the adverse effect this can have on the law-abiding public. When reported to the team we look to analyse the circumstances and try to ascertain some background information before generating an action plan that can also involve other units and partners. We will also look engage with the involved persons where a positive approach is made with the desire being that resolutions are found. Failing that a more

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robust approach can be taken whereby officers will look to gather evidence with the intention of gaining sufficient evidence to provide a crime report to the Procurator fiscal.

Other matters

PC Laura Kerr has been offered a new post in the training dept and currently awaits a date to start this position. To this end and in preparation for her new post, PC Kerr has been away from her area undertaking training to best prepare her for her new role. Unfortunately, this has meant further abstraction and availability for beat officers to be visible within the community. However, to allay any fears we will be advertising from officers to come into the beats team and hopefully they will be in place in time for the next newsletter.

Finally, as a community beat team, we are all very conscious that matters of concerns within your areas may go unreported and you may feel that you do not see an officer. I would actively encourage any issues reported to the community council to be forwarded onto the team using the details at the end of this newsletter. Indeed, it would be appreciated that following the distribution of this newsletter information can be fed back into the team where we will look to try and work towards a resolution or increased visibility.

From the team:

PC Keith Whitelaw: Community officer for; Merkinch and South Kessock.

Over the month of April, I have been involved in various aspects of policing both within and out with the Merkinch and South Kessock community, I have tried to break this down into sections.

- **Response policing support:** I aided response policing teams across Dingwall, Alness, Tain, Nairn, Aviemore and Inverness to cover absences and low officer numbers.
- **Addressing concerns about an abandoned house:** I responded to community concerns about an abandoned house in Ardersier, working in partnership to bring the matter to a close, including bringing the house up for auction soon. This was a long-standing issue within the Ardersier community that, I took ownership of and engaged with partners to resolve.
- **Supporting vulnerable individuals:** I visited vulnerable members of the community, offering support and safety advice to ensure their well-being. If you know of any vulnerable adults in the community, I want to know, so that I can visit with them and if appropriate, help where possible by bringing in our partners.
- **Assisting families with challenging individuals:** I aided families dealing with challenging teenagers, offering guidance and support where appropriate. I have spent some time with individual families, to try and understand what we can do to help. This is an ongoing process.
- **School visits:** Engaged with pupils and staff at nurseries, primary and secondary schools, answering questions and providing advice during visits. Early positive

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interactions with policing can have a long-lasting effect on individuals. I welcome the opportunity to do this whenever I am invited along to events.

- **Engagement with small businesses:** I engaged with small businesses for various reasons, fostering positive relationships and addressing concerns. These interactions allow me to be visible in the community and hopefully seem approachable to members of the public.
- **Community patrols:** Patrolled the community in marked police cars, on the bike to engage with residents and deter criminal activity. This is to deter criminality, maintain order and to be readily available within the Merkinch / South Kessock community.
- **Addressing drug use and anti-social behaviour:** I've been working with partners to address concerns around drug use and anti-social behaviour, focussing on known hotspots and making my presence known. This is of particular concern in the area, residents all over are being affected by this. I encourage as much reporting as possible to allow Policing to build up a more accurate picture of what's happening, and where.
- **Addressing individuals:** I've confronted individuals attempting to cause trouble in the community, especially those preying on the vulnerable. This has made me unpopular with some and popular with others. I have the responsibility, along with the wider policing family, to maintain order. This comes under that banner.
- **Tackling youth trouble on Telford Road:** Visited all businesses on Telford Road following concerns about youths causing trouble, with investigations underway to identify individuals involved.
- **Designing community postcard:** I've collaborated with partners to design an easy-to-read postcard for community distribution, providing access to service and information. This postcard has not been printed yet, however, I'm hopeful you will see it come to life soon.
- **Policing football matches and high court:** Carried out policing duties at footballing events and in the high court as part of regular responsibilities.

The community in Merkinch is a welcoming one. I am privileged to be the community officer for the area. I will continue to do my best on a daily basis. Please let me know if you wish to speak with me or have any ideas that might help the Merkinch community.

Keith

PC Katie Johnstone: Community officer for; Dalneigh, Torvean, Bught, Scorguie & Kinmylies

During the month of April I have been to visit some of the Primary schools in my area. This included visiting the P1s from Dalneigh Primary and giving them all a

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chance to see in the Police car and turn the blue lights on. I gave a talk to the P7s from Dalneigh Primary in relation to staying safe online and social media. We had good discussion surrounding the positives and negatives of social media. I also attended St. Joseph's Primary where I delivered a similar talk, they engaged well and asked lots of questions.



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I have received complaints surrounding the diversion on Ballifeary Lane, the complaint is buses and larger lorries are unsuitable for this location and manoeuvring in a way that causes danger to pedestrians. I have patrolled the area and will deal with any offences that present themselves. My colleague PC Macleod has also attended the hotel, Ness Walk and informed them of the complaint to pass on advice to any buses attending the hotel. I would encourage the Community Council to liaise with Highland Council in relation to this issue as this has been designated as a suitable diversion. Due to the ongoing roadworks on Ness Walk which I understand have been delayed, this diversion could be in place for some time.

I have visited the local businesses in my area and unfortunately all seem to be affected by shoplifting. We have discussed measures that can be put in place to deter thieves. Unfortunately, two of the local business have been affected by violent crime where one shopkeeper was injured and the other victim of robbery. These incidents are treated very serious, and both have had a suspect identified.

I continue to get reports of drug dealing in the Dalneigh area and would encourage anyone who believes there is ongoing drug dealing to contact the Police or Crimestoppers. I target these areas with patrols on foot, bike and in a marked car. We rely on the community to provide us information about any criminality, specific details of persons/vehicles/locations, which assist us in targeting the offenders and disrupting the criminal behaviour.

I was invited to attend Girl Guiding and Rangers meet. The aim was to provide young members an understanding that the Police are approachable and are sources of safety or information when needed, as well as the Police service being a career that girls can do as some in the unit do still see it as a male only occupation. I was proud to provide insight into Policing as a woman, and breaking down assumptions that it is a male only career.

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As a local child protection officer, I am required as part of my duties, to assist in child protection enquiries, which I have been tasked to do on multiple occasions this month. I have also been required to assist in other areas to maintain minimum staffing levels. Other duties I have been required to undertake is Court officer, assisting other stations, Mountain rescue incidents, and assisting response in Inverness.

I have been made aware of anti-social behaviour at Eden Court, this involves young people hanging about, running through the building, and on occasion vandalising outdoor furniture. I have spoken with staff, and encouraged to report any incidents to Police, I have also added extra patrols to the area.

There have been community tensions following a male being reported for a sexual offence in Dalneigh. This was investigated immediately which resulted in his arrest and being reported to the Court. There have been subsequent posts going up on social media by members of the public, and vigilante type behaviour, which is stirring up tensions. I have increased my presence in the area to provide reassurance and have undertaken numerous meetings with housing. I have been in the local Primary school to discuss and provided advice to them.

There was a recent fire in an abandoned building on Clachnaharry Road. Due to the extent of the fire, Fire Service had to work on the fire for over 24 hours, which caused disruption to the area as a road closure was necessary to allow water to be drawn from the canal. There were no persons injured from the fire and nearby buildings were not damaged, however they did suffer power loss for approximately 8 hours. The Fire Service worked tirelessly to ensure the fire was fully extinguished, protecting nearby properties and residents.

I have received complaints of dirt bikes being ridden in Torvean Park, this is causing the grass to be churned up. During my patrols I traced two young males riding dirt bikes at the end of the park. There was no fresh damage to the grass area as they had been keeping to the dirt hill. I took this opportunity to educate them surrounding the use of dirt bikes. They were informed they must only ride their dirt bike on private land with the landowner's permission or at designated off-road tracks and facilities. I am not aware of any local designated off-road tracks, this may be something the community council could explore to give the riders a safe place to ride, without disturbing or endangering other members of the public. The young males were suitably warned should they be riding the dirt bikes in a public place again. We continue to receive reports of young persons, riding dirt bikes on the canal paths, without helmets and without due care for the public. These riders are very difficult to trace, given the number of paths to and from the canal, and most not being suitable for vehicles. I continue to patrol the canal by bike and will deal with them robustly should they be traced.

I have patrolled the local Primary Schools at pick up and drop off times. All in my area have complaints surrounding the parking. I provide suitable advice while in attendance and remind parents of their responsibilities to park responsibly, and move vehicles on that are not suitably parked, while warning the drivers. I will enforce any offences committed in relation to dangerous parking or obstructions. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide any long-term solutions, as this needs to be education for parents, along with ensuring there is proper signage, clear road markings, and a suitable place for drop off/pick up. I cannot enforce decriminalised parking infringements; this is the responsibility of the Council Traffic wardens. I will continue to provide a Police presence during these times when duties allow.

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Smithton, Culloden, Balloch, Ardersier & Croy

There is currently no community beat officer for this area. This vacancy is due to be filled in the coming weeks. Community beat officers from other areas will continue to try and cover this area in the meantime.

Raigmore, Drakies, Milton of Ley, Crown & Millburn

There is currently no community beat officer for this area. This vacancy is due to be filled in the coming weeks. Community beat officers from other areas will continue to try and cover this area in the meantime.

PC Cailean Macleod: Community officer for; Hilton, Holm, Lochardil, Culduthel and Inshes

I have been involved with a variety of work and duties across my beats in the month of April in addition to having some well earned annual leave as well.

Road Safety

Road safety continues to be area of concern for the community. I have carried out high visibility speed checks at the following streets across my beats where issues have been flagged up and also outside schools:

- Culduthel Road
- Old Edinburgh Road
- Stratherrick Road
- Balnakyle Road

Several drivers were warned about their speed and I happy to report no drivers were speeding to the extent that they required to be issued with a fixed penalty. I will continue to carry out high visibility speed checks as they are a very visible deterrent and reminder to drivers to adhere to the speed limits.

School visits

I have carried out visits to the following schools:

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- Hilton
- Cauldeen
- Drakies
- Inshes

Supporting schools to ensure their pupils are safe is very important and delivering inputs on topics such as drugs, respectful behaviour and internet safety. In addition, I have worked with some head teachers regarding issues with pupils which have occurred out in the community.

Business engagement

I have continued carry out many licensed premises to ensure those shops and bars selling alcohol are doing so in a lawful and responsible manner. I pleased to report I have a good working relationship with many shop keepers and bar persons which enables me to ensure adherence to the licensing laws whilst supporting them tackling shoplifting and anti-social behaviour affecting the staff.

Drugs

I continue to work closely with the community to gather information on a confidential basis to enable other departments in the Police to target those involved in drugs supply and in particular 'county lines' groups which have operated predominantly in the Hilton beat.

I have worked also to divert those people with issues with substance misuse towards help from health and other partner organisations as a long-term approach to reduce demand for drugs will bring about a safer community along with robust lawful enforcement activities tackling the supply of drugs.

Youth Engagement

I have continued to engage with youths across my beats and make a point of speaking and engaging with young people out on patrol. A friendly word of advice is often all it takes to ensure young people can continue to play and spend time out in the community to be health as apposed to 'crossing the line' into behaviour and actions which are anti-social and impact on the wider community.

Alas there are issues with a small number of young people engaging in anti-social antics in particular parts of Hilton and Inshes and will continue to patrol these areas to deter, disrupt

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and divert the young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour. I have met with new youth worker for Hilton and will be working closely with him in the coming weeks and months.

Vulnerable People

I continue to offer support and help to those in our communities who are vulnerable. Please contact me if there is someone who requires a friendly word/visit or referral to a partner agency for additional support. I have regularly attended the Hilton warm spaces/hot food initiative at the Hilton community centre to engage with the many people who attend there.

Patrols

I continue to focus my foot and cycle patrols on areas in my beats which are blighted by anti-social behaviour, drug misuse and other forms of criminality. I have many restrictions on my time in terms of abstractions and other duties and I have to prioritise my patrols.

Other duties

I continue to have provide backfill cover duties on response shifts both in Inverness and across the Highlands due to ongoing staffing issues affecting the Highland Police division. I continue also be actively involved in the Highland Police Mountain Rescue Team which covers the whole of the Highlands which involves being called out for missing person searches and other search duties in the mountains as and when required.

City Centre (CCPT)

With summer approaching, the City Centre has seen an increase of visitors in recent weeks. The City Centre Team welcome these extra visitors and have had numerous positive engagements with people visiting.

The team have also continued their commitment to engage with youths, some of which have been causing issues within the City Centre. We are attempting to encourage them to divert their attention from causing annoyance to some other more positive activities, but when some see the benefit of this others continue to cause problems. We are doing this whilst working alongside other agencies and are hopeful of a positive response from the youths. Although we are having some positive engagements there are still incidents which involve youths being charged and reports submitted regarding various offences.

Shoplifting is still a constant issue within the City Centre, with numerous daily reports being received. The Team is committed and motivated to deal with offenders quickly, which has resulted in the recovery of stolen goods, arrests and offenders being brought before the courts. This remains a national issue, and with the assistance of colleagues in retail, CCTV and the BID team we are having some success with this issue.

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The evening economy remains busy, particularly during the weekends, which can cause issues when individuals overindulge with alcohol. By working alongside of colleagues working at the Licensed premises, we continue to deal with violent people on a regular basis, with several arrests being made and charges being brought against people being violent or causing disorder.

We as a Team are looking forward to welcoming visitors to the City Centre in the coming busy summer months and are also committed to assisting with upcoming events within the City Centre.

Fort Augustus Report

Easter has seen an increased number of tourists to the area, vehicles on the roads and businesses opening after their Winter breaks. Hopefully the weather will improve soon too!

I recently had a busy couple of days working with a Special Constable from Aviemore. The Special Constabulary consists of voluntary officers with identical powers to police officers. He assisted me in progressing enquiries where I needed corroboration and we also carried out high visibility speed checks in Invermoriston and Fort Augustus.

As a result of this work, a report will be submitted to Procurator Fiscal in relation to a driver caught speeding who already had 9 points on their licence.



Working with the Special Constable was hugely beneficial to me as I mostly work single crewed. I will definitely be arranging for other Special Constables to join me in future and I am planning to team up with my colleagues in Roads Policing for joint patrols of the area too.

I am investigating a theft from a property on the outskirts of Drumnadrochit which occurred on 14/03/2024. The suspect was captured on CCTV and as a result of the footage being shared on local social media I have had several calls from concerned members of the community. I encourage members of the community to continue report suspicious behaviour which can assist in focussing my patrols to specific areas and times.

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I recently issued a Formal Police Warning in relation to a neighbour dispute. Formal Police Warnings are an alternative to prosecution which can be issued in relation to certain crime types where the offender meets certain criteria. It is a proportionate response to crimes of a minor nature.

Contact us

Police Scotland can be contacted via a variety of ways. In an emergency and/or when a crime is ongoing, please dial 999 otherwise please use the 101 phone number to report any other crimes or matters.

For non-urgent routines matters or to highlight issues or make contact with specific officers then the following email addresses can be used:

Inverness rural beats – Beaulay / Cannich / Drumnadrochit / Fort Augustus / Foyers:

HighlandsandIslandsBeaulayFortAugustus@scotland.police.uk

For concerns and issues in the city of Inverness area and the rural beats of Ardersier, Daviot, Tomatin and Strathdearn:

HighlandsandIslandsCommunityBeatsInverness@scotland.police.uk

Please be aware that this e-mail address is not monitored 24/7 and is a contact email. Specific crimes should not be reported by these email addresses. Crimes should be reported via the telephone systems 999 or 101.

Any matters raised at community council meetings or specific community concerns should be emailed in and include the following details to enable your enquiry to deal with efficiently:

- Contact name
- Contact phone number
- Details of the issue – times/places/people/history of the issue

Policing Survey

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/research-and-insights/your-police/>

Statistics

Crime statistics for your community council area can be found using the following link –

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<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/crime-data/>

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