NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF THE 16th PUBLIC MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY 2003 AT 12:00 NOON

IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:	Professor Desmond Rea (Chairman) Mr Denis Bradley (Vice-Chairman) Mr Alex Attwood Viscount Brookeborough Mr Joe Byrne Mr Fred Cobain Mr Brian Dougherty Mr Sam Foster Mr Barry Gilligan Mr William Hay Lord Kilclooney Mrs Pauline McCabe Mr Alan McFarland Mrs Rosaleen Moore Mr Ian Paisley Jnr Mr Suneil Sharma Mr Sammy Wilson
POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr Hugh Orde (Chief Constable) Mr Paul Leighton (Deputy Chief Constable) Mr Sam Kinkaid (Assistant Chief Constable) Mr Duncan McCausland (Assistant Chief Constable) Mr Joe Stewart (Senior Director of Human Resources) Mr Austin Hunter (Director of Media and Public Relations) A/Superintendent Peter Farrar C/Inspector, Command Secretariat
OFFICALS IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr Bob McCann (Chief Executive) Head of Business Affairs Head of Policy and Accountability Head of Training and Community Consultation Acting Head of Audit Services

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mr Kelly and Mr McGrady.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
I would like to welcome members of the public and media to this public session. I apologise for the delay, it is difficult to programme the business that it ends as promptly as one would wish.

I would also welcome the Chief Constable and his colleagues to this public session and Mr Leigh Gassner, who is an Assistant Commissioner of the Victoria Police in Australia.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
Thank you Chairman. As requested by the Board, Acting Superintendent Peter Farrar is here to give a short presentation on auto crime and in particular in relation to West Belfast, so I will hand over to him.

Acting Superintendent Farrar:
Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give a short presentation on tackling vehicle crime, particularly in West Belfast.

If I can start with the problem itself. In the last financial year 2002/2003, vehicle theft and by that I mean permanent theft of vehicles as well as taking and driving away, which is more commonly referred to as “joy riding”, resulted in 8,317 vehicles being stolen within Northern Ireland. 7.3% of the total figure of Northern Ireland were taken within West Belfast, again that is thefts and taking and driving away, and that is 609 vehicles. Many of you might think that the figure would have been higher but a lot of the car criminals are

actually from West Belfast and therefore they take vehicles outside of West Belfast, that is probably why the figure is slightly lower. They take the vehicles from outside their own area and then they move back in.

In the last financial year, we had 4,770 vehicles recovered. Within West Belfast that was 1,225 vehicles recovered. That is 25% of all vehicles recovered in Northern Ireland are recovered within West Belfast. This reiterates the point I made, that whilst they are stolen from outside West Belfast, the vast majority end up in West Belfast.

What is our strategy? We have 5 strands to our strategy. The first one is in relation to our analysis, before we do anything we will analyise the problem. We will look at the hot spots, where it is actually happening. We will look at the target nominals, the people who are doing it. We will identify them and we will go after those car thieves. The modus operandi, different people work in different ways, different car thieves. We work through intelligence received, intelligence interviews, so that every single person who is arrested for any car crime offence will be asked in relation to other car crimes that they are aware of. Finger prints is obviously a major issue, as is DNA, as well as vehicle types. So, it is who, what, when, where, why and how.

The second strand is more in relation to our marketing strategy, communication and prevention and we listen to the community. Back about a year ago, at the time when the Auto Crime Team was being set up, we recognised that there were issues with some of the community in phoning their local police station. So, we decided to set up a specific telephone hotline number for 24 hours a day, answered by a police officer, that goes straight into the Auto Crime Team and that is Belfast 610202. It is now being recognised throughout West Belfast and further afield. We have done poster campaigns throughout West Belfast but in particular, hot spots like the Royal Victoria Hospital. We have used fliers to be put on cars, which again are in

hot spots, e. g supermarkets, hospitals. At particular times, like Christmas, where police officers have identified cars, which had presents sitting in the back of vehicles, we have written to the registered owner saying that we saw their car in a particular street, which was a hot spot and reminded them of the dangers of leaving items out to be seen.

We carried out a leaflet drop with the help of the Post Office. All 35,000 homes in West Belfast received our leaflet regarding the Auto Crime Team and the hot line telephone number. We work very closely with the media - television, radio and the newspapers. In addition, we have made available at a reduced price, car security devices that could be fitted around steering wheels. We have sold over 200 in the last year. Police officers are selling these at no profit to the Police Service. After an article appeared in one of the main newspapers, 26 were sold in May alone.

The third strand is the planned operations. It is not just the police within West Belfast, we are also talking about police air support, the Criminal Justice Unit and the recovery. On any day we have normal patrol vehicles within West Belfast that are out and about. For specific operations against car crime, those vehicles will not be not tied into the operation directly, they will be indirectly tied into it. What we do is we bring in other resources, these are regular operations right throughout the year.

We have the Auto Crime Team which is comprised of 10 officers, who eat, drink and sleep this issue constantly throughout the year. We have a Sector Support Team which is known as “the Blues”, approximately 16 officers who are out and about giving support in land rovers. These officers are usually the ones who deploy the stinger device. We have sector officers working as part of the operation and the aeroplane, plus the support that is required for it. We also have the dog call signs brought in, the control room, and even the

stations within West Belfast, the station security. The officers who are on station security will be very aware the operation is on and they feel part of it. It works on a different radio channel so the officers involved in the car crime operation will not be tasked to any other calls that come in. In total, we are talking about 45 officers during this operation, simply dealing with car crime.

So, to link in closer to the Auto Crime Team itself, obviously there has been a history of car crime in West Belfast for some time. Two years ago, the police boundaries changed and the areas of Poleglass and Twinbrook moved to Lisburn

District Command Unit. Of course, the car criminals themselves did not see that boundary change. A year ago it was recognised by Lisburn and West Belfast that as 2 separate districts we had to come together and create a team that would overlap across the district boundary. So the Auto Crime Team was set up around mid July last year, since then they have made 294 arrests, they have recovered 98 vehicles and that is not counting all the other vehicles that Lisburn patrol officers and West Belfast patrol officers are recovering. They have been involved in
72 stings, that is the stinger device that punctures the tyres of stolen vehicles.

Regarding road traffic collisions, they have been involved in 6 road traffic collisions over the last year all of which have very obviously not been their fault. In each case they were deliberately rammed by other people. They have successfully opposed bail on 41 occasions, again a very difficult issue for the Auto Crime Team. However, there is more pain for the Auto Crime Team and for all police officers within Lisburn and West Belfast. From January 2001 to April of this year, just over 2 years, 169 officers within West Belfast district have been injured by stolen vehicles and a further 44 officers have been injured by suspect vehicles which are now commonly called “runabouts” by police and people within the area. These are vehicles which

are not stolen but will probably not be taxed. The driver probably has no driving licence, will not be insured and will not have a vehicle test certificate. In total we have had 213 officers within West Belfast in a period of about 2 years who have been injured through stolen vehicles, that represents an average of 8 officers per month injured as a result of car crime. In addition, over the last 3 years we have had an average of 3 officers per year, purely in West Belfast district, who are medically retired as a result of injuries sustained as a result of car crime in West Belfast.

Finally and probably most important, is the issue of partnerships, working with everyone who can help us to deal with this problem. It is a jigsaw and if all the pieces in the jigsaw are not there then the whole picture will not be seen. This includes the organisation Families Bereaved Through Car Crime who have been very courageous in working with the police over the last year. A new initiative

called 'Impact' which was set up by the Probation and uses everybody from community representatives, through to the social services and the police, the direct telephone line for the Auto Crime Team and the leaflet campaigns in the community. Everyone who is arrested and goes to a custody suite is given an information pack, not only regarding the police, but also regarding impact on the Families Bereaved Through Car Crime. Working with shopping centres within West Belfast and with the Royal Victoria Hospital.

So what is the impact of this? Well, in the last financial year, the theft of vehicles in West Belfast reduced by 9%. The theft of vehicles throughout the 10 districts that make up urban region, reduced by 9.6%. The theft of vehicles throughout Northern Ireland reduced by 7.6%. The argument made by police and also by members of the community throughout West Belfast is that is that the major problem is, that is where the criminals live, and the more we can deal with this within West Belfast then the more it has an affect

throughout Northern Ireland. That is a reduction that is carrying on from the previous year, when there was a reduction of almost one-third.

One of the major issues for the criminal justice system is, as I have referred to before, the issue of “runabouts”. We and people on the ground see that a lot of the car criminals are moving from stolen cars, as our powers and our effectiveness increases, into what are known as “runabouts”. This is major concern for police, as police powers are greatly restricted in relation to the driver and the occupants of a vehicle that is not stolen, despite the real risk that they actually pose to the public. The driver and the passengers will one evening be in a stolen vehicle, the next evening in a “runabout”. There will be absolutely no difference in their style of driving. However, we have no immediate power of arrest. For dangerous or careless driving we have no power of arrest and for disqualified drivers we have no power of arrest. That greatly restricts us when the vehicles are actually owned, like a runabout vehicle.

Sentencing also causes us certain difficulties, in that the maximum sentence for taking and driving away is only 6 months and bail has been in the past a major issue for us. We will always make every effort to charge offenders to the first available court, if we can to the very next day and we will always attempt to oppose bail when appropriate, particularly were repeat offenders or serious offences are involved, to protect the community from their activities. However, we have seen that the courts will often have to release offenders for different reasons, particularly when they have been remanded in custody after 8 weeks, as sometimes the sentences will not be beyond 8 weeks and that is a issue that hopefully we can move on in the future.

So, to the future. With the emphasis changing from stolen vehicles to "runabouts" last year for 3 months between March and June there was an operation called 'Operation Clean-up'. The ideology behind that was to remove the vehicles used by most opportunist criminals and indeed the so called "joyriders" who are moving to "runabouts", to remove those vehicles from the roads and therefore
reduce the ability to commit crime.

Again, partnerships were used, the PSNI, the Driver Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade, Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, and the Northern Ireland Office were all involved. The methodology was purely to remove untaxed vehicles from the roads but there is a knock on effect. The outcome in that 3 month pilot period was there were 943 vehicles seized within Belfast. That resulted, whether directly or indirectly in a 19% reduction in car theft, a 27% reduction in theft from vehicles, a 22% reduction in road traffic collisions, a 23% reduction in deliberate arson involving cars and almost a third of a reduction in abandoned vehicles. Road fund licence sales rose by 6% during this period. We found that of those 940 vehicles seized, only 17% of them were insured.

In summary, the cost of that operation was approximately £100,000. Bearing in mind that those percentage reductions are from a very conservative view point,

just over a £1m was actually saved. The revenue that came to the Driver Vehicle Licensing was almost £2m. So the value of that operation was very conservatively about £3m. The cost of the operation was £100,000 and of course there were many other issues that the community were very glad to see in that.

We will be calling for appropriate sentencing, along with education to try and stop this in the first place. There is also the bail issue, but finally and probably most importantly is the whole idea of partnerships, particularly working with the community.

Thank you very much, now if there are any questions.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:
Thank you for your presentation. Could you give us just some more facts in terms of the 4,000 vehicles or so that the police have recovered. How many of those vehicles would be complete “write offs”. Are any of them recovered in a state of repair which they can then be returned to their owner and used again? On the more important issue of what the courts are doing, do you agree that essentially the courts are letting the police down in terms of how they handle this. It must be demoralising and frustrating for your officers when they arrest or re-arrest a “low life” who has taken these cars, damaged them and they bring him before the courts and this “low life” gets bail. That must be absolutely demoralising. I know for a victim of car crime and there are victims around this table of car crime, that it is most demoralising to know that usually the people who perpetrate these crimes seem to get away with it and it does not appear to be the fault of the police, it appears to be the courts, whenever the police bring these people to the court.

Acting Superintendent Farrar:
Chairman, as to the issue of vehicles that are damaged, 25% of recovered vehicles are recovered in West Belfast. From our point of view, a very large

proportion of those would actually be burnt out. They are scattered around West Belfast and we aim to pick those up within a very short period of time.

Fortunately, there are some vehicles that we can deliver back to the owners, but sometimes although there is not obvious damage there is probably damage done to the engine or the clutch or gears, so either way there is a great expense involved.

With regards to the courts, the more we can work in partnership with the community, the more the community come to us as they have proved over the last year, the more evidence we get. Really it is a question of evidence, if people come forward and they have on certain occasions come forward in droves to help us with that evidence, particularly with high profile cases, that gives us the power to go with that evidence into court and present that to the magistrate or the judge. It really comes down to the witnesses and the evidence that we can produce and I think the community actually realise that themselves. The more evidence we can give to the court the more I think that they will be able to do for us.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Viscount Alan Brookeborough.

Viscount Alan Brookeborough:
Thank you very much. Can you give us any idea of the financial consequences to the community of car crime in your area? Secondly, if you are recovering approximately a £1m for the DOE Licensing Department, are you getting a refund and if not, why not?

Acting Superintendent Farrar:
With regard to the financial aspect within the community, I am not quite sure. I can certainly tell you there is very much a personal loss within the community. Whether it is people losing their lives, or the injuries to people, but even beyond that, the people who are lying in bed at 2 o'clock in the morning who hear these cars racing up and down, that is a major issue for the people within West Belfast, let alone the police officers who are injured or medically retired each year.

As regards the funding issue, I believe it is more an issue for the United Kingdom rather than Northern Ireland, I think there are difficulties in Swansea with that, it is probably more a Treasury issue. It is one which we are attempting to look at, we will do our best to push at that but I believe at this stage it will not be easy.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
One final question from Mr Sammy Wilson.

Mr Sammy Wilson:
Thank you Chairman. You said that there are 8,317 vehicles stolen and 4,777 recovered, that means 42% are not recovered, have you any idea what happens to those vehicles? Secondly, you mentioned about the limited powers that the police have especially with those who are involved in "runabouts", dangerous driving, driving without a licence etc. The Northern Ireland Office have recently published a document dealing with driving offences, has any representation been made to ensure that the police do have added powers of arrest?

Acting Superintendent Farrar:
With regards to the recovered vehicles, yes we do recover vehicles that are unfortunately completely destroyed, probably through arson, or just very badly damaged, however, those figures also relate to thefts as opposed to taking and driving away. Taking and driving away is more to do with the actual car criminals or the so called 'joy riders', but a lot of those cars are also thefts. In other words the person who has stolen it is deliberately wanting to permanently deprive the owner of it and never give it back, so they will probably change the number plates and try and move it, maybe even out of the country. There are many vehicles that are involved in that as well. I'm not sure of the actual figure for that.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Lord Kilclooney, it seems you have a question.

Lord Kilclooney:
No fine, that has been asked now by Mr Sammy Wilson.

Acting Superintendent Farrar:
Could you remind me of the second question?

Mr Sammy Wilson:
It was about the additional powers the police require and a response to the NIO document.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
If I could just help on that question Chairman. Since I have been here, I have been amazed by the fact that anywhere else in the United Kingdom, if you were caught disqualified driving and arrested, you would be in court the next day. We have done a lot of work with the NIO and politicians on this and I have been promised that as soon as they can get some legislative instrument to put it on we will get a power of arrest for disqualified driving.

By way of example, two weeks ago on 'Operation Viper' 44 people were arrested who are disqualified drivers. It is a hugely important power because it allows us get them to court the next day, but we have been promised that.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Thank you Acting Superintendent Farrar on behalf of the Board for a very interesting report on this most welcome initiative. Perhaps you could ultimately let us have your notes if you would not mind, so they can go to the appropriate committee.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
I thought it would be useful, bearing in mind the launch of our Police Report last week, to give a quick summary of some of the performance achieved in the last few weeks.

In particular, there is an ongoing operation at the moment, just by way of example, where 5 arrests have already been made in relation to dissident activity in Belfast. It has reached the press. One of the recoveries has been more lists of targeting information, which is currently being progressed through our systems to make sure people are warned that they are on that. This month in Newtownards, a major operation against loyalist paramilitaries, 7 arrests, 11 searches, £10,000 worth of amphetamine together with money and other items have led to 2 people being charged and 5 others being reported to the DPP.

Craigavon, the biggest seizure so far of counterfeit goods and equipment £½m worth. We have uncovered some state of the art DVD duplicating equipment which has never been encountered before in Northern Ireland.

You may be aware that there was also an arms and ammunition find in Castlereagh. We would attribute this to loyalist paramilitaries, 5 hand guns recovered, a number of people were arrested and 2 men were charged.
In relation to a slightly older case, you will be aware that one of the Shoukri brothers joined his other brother this week for a 6 year prison sentence for possession of a firearm. My colleague, Acting Superintendent Farrar just raised the issue of bail. This man was on bail for a substantial period of time. What is interesting is that on the grounds of the substantial nature of the sentence, perhaps we would hope to be more successful in keeping these people locked up before their sentence in the future. But another major result, the other Shoukri brother together with Courtney, you will also be aware that since the last Board meeting he has been charged with the murder of Mr McCullough.

That is a broad overview Chairman of some of the achievements that have been achieved by my officers this month.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Suneil Sharma has a question on ethnic intimidation.

Mr Suneil Sharma:
With the first use of a pipe bomb in a racially motivated attack on a South African family in south Belfast and recent other racially motivated attacks, what are PSNI doing to apprehend the perpetrators of such attacks and what steps are being taken to protect and support vulnerable families in the area?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
I was unsighted on the specific nature of that question but certainly I will see you after the meeting and give you some of the details.

In terms of the broader picture, certainly crime and racially motivated crime is taken extremely seriously. We have a number of people, community leaders who we meet, for example of our biggest community, the Chinese community, I have met on one occasion. I know my colleagues have to deal with the specific issues that concern that community, so we do take it extremely seriously, it is dealt with at a district level. In the future of our reorganisation, which I will come to slightly later, there will be no threat to any of the investment we are putting into dealing with the diverse communities that we are responsible for policing. It is taken very seriously and we continue to take it seriously and that will not change. In terms of the specific investigation you are talking about, I will get you the information by the end of the day.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Alex Attwood has a question relating to the recommendations from the Crompton and Stevens reports.

Mr Alex Attwood:
Could I first of all acknowledge the Auto Crime Unit in Belfast, because they are the cutting edge of good policing practice and that has increasingly been recognised within the community.

Could I ask the Chief Constable, there been some media comment in relation to proposed new structures in respect of serious and organised crime, could you give us some heads up in relation to those matters. Do you believe that the implementation will see the full implementation of the Stevens, Crompton and Blakely recommendations and that as a consequence, what the Oversight Commissioner refers to as the timely and accurate information to police officers investigating violent or organised crimes, from those with an intelligence function within the police will be fulfilled?

Could I also ask you to comment on the judgement yesterday, in the European court, both in respect of its relevance to the investigation into the murder of
Pat Finucane and any wider consequences within the judgement for the investigation of past murders generally?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
Thank you. If it helps, I could give a broad overview of where we are in relation to the organised crime or Crime Operations Group. You will be aware this is a major restructuring programme, it is not just crime operations. It is the whole structure of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, in the sense that we are looking at 2 regions not 3, both of which will be headed by an Assistant Chief Constable who will lead on performance in the districts to ensure that volume crime is properly and professionally dealt with.

In terms of crime operations and the specific nature of your question, then ACC Sam Kinkaid, who is here today will lead on that.

We are now at the stage, as I briefed the Board earlier today, to move on into implementation. In broad terms, the Crime Operations Group will bring together a new unit of officers who will be responsible for dealing with reactive investigations into murder. There will be dedicated murder teams in keeping with the many recommendations from many reports. It will also bring all the proactive capacity I have under one command and all the intelligence gathering capacity I have under one central command. It is getting organised. It will use the national intelligence model, which is the whole principle of using intelligence wherever you can for action and also make sure that we do not all go after the same people. The bottom line is, that it will identify with absolute clarity who we are in the business of removing from the community. It is because they create the biggest threat at a series of levels, be it at the central level, the organised crime level or the district level. The disorganised but local crime which affects local communities, we will make sure that we use our resources in the most efficient way to bring those under our control and to bring them to justice.

My estimation, in terms of the recommendations, is the new structure will deal with about 90% to 95% of all the recommendations. Now there are some issues because of the number of reports we have benefited from recently, that simply contradict each other so we need to do some more work on that. We will bring those contradictions to the Board's attention and we will deal with them. The main ones under Patten for example, one head of Special Branch and CID is not offended, that remains to be the case.

In terms of your concerns about bringing the Oversight Commissioner's observation, the successes that I have just outlined by way of example of the cases that would not have got anywhere without the proper use of intelligence. Probably 99% of the successes in Northern Ireland in major and organised crime are as a result of sensible use of very delicate sources to gather intelligence and to enable us to turn it into evidence, be it about crime

intelligence, or be it about Special Branch intelligence. That is how it is working and that is how we are getting the successes and that is why people like Mr Shoukri is now serving 6 years in prison rather than running a criminal gang outside.

There are protocols already in place. If a murder investigation team requires information from colleagues in Special Branch, he or she gets it. That is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding, that has been agreed between our Assistant Chief Constables, so that is a broad plan around crime operations. The fallout from that is that criminal justice issues which we see as extremely important, equally important in a different way, will come under the command of a separate Assistant Chief Constable. This is to make sure that we get involved as we need to, with all the other Criminal Justice Agencies and the courts to drive forward the issues identified by my colleague earlier, to get the law changed where we need it changed and to get people into court far more quickly than we are currently and to bring to the attention of a judiciary and other players our concerns where we feel perhaps we could get more support in some of the cases of bringing to court. That is not to interfere with their independence whatsoever, it is just to bring to their attention the issues my officers face on a day to day basis. So that is where we are with the major crime review.

I offered to the Board this morning a full briefing by my Corporate Development ACC Roy Toner who leads on the implementation of this, in about one month's time so we can go into the detail, so the Board has a very clear understanding of where we are going. I think it is an important piece of business and I am very confident it will deliver what we all want it to deliver, which is an efficient and even more effective police service. I would say that is good news.

In relation to your second question, the interesting link is the Crime Operations Group will have the Murder Review Team, it will be centralised

under the command of that Assistant Chief Constable. His primary function has to be to make sure current murders are reviewed within 28 days to assist and to support the senior investigating officer in terms of alternative strategies and alternative lines of enquiry. It will also have a role to look at historic cases. As you know, the numbers of the cases, do not add up in terms of how many staff I have to deal with current murders.

In relation to the Finucane finding, it is so easy to criticise the quality of investigation in 1989 when there were far more investigations than there are now. If you go back further than that to 1972 when over 440 people died, to expect an investigation of a quality you would get if you were murdered today is simply not the case. The courts in Strasburg historically have been very good at ignoring the context, in fact they have excluded the context from their deliberations when forming a view. This is always regarded as difficult for people from my side because it is simply ignoring reality. However, in this case they said the initial investigation was not effective, they made no comment on what should happen now. It is worth remembering, that since then an investigation of some 3 years standing fully funded, fully resourced, almost to ACPO standards has charged people with murder for that case. So the suggestion that in terms of an effective investigation that that is not the case, I would argue that the Stevens investigation deals with that particular part of that debate.

On the wider issue, I think it is quiet interesting and quite clear at the first reading of it, of course it only came out I think, yesterday, in that the court did not make any ruling as to what should happen next. It also made some very sensible observations in relation to the likelihood of success in very old cases. It made the point that it was unrealistic to expect that you can simply solve every case by going back and putting a dedicated team of investigators onto it. I think that is very important and will feature in our considerations when deciding which cases we can take forward and which cases we cannot take forward. All the wins, all the learning in the United Kingdom is that the successful historic investigations are where forensic advances have moved

on to such an extent that old exhibits can be subject to new techniques which give you substantial evidence.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mrs Pauline McCabe has a question on attacks on young people.

Mrs Pauline McCabe:
Chief Constable, we noted that in your report for this month that you mentioned there were 300 attacks on young people under the age of 17 and this is a problem certainly in the area where I live. There have been numerous such attacks over the last 12 month period and some of them extremely vicious. It is probably one of the things that is raised most often with me by local, very concerned parents of teenagers. How do you consider that local police can most effectively address this problem and what must others, such as off licences, bar staff, night clubs, the local community and parents do to actually play their part in helping?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
This covers a huge area, I will give a broad overview and ACC Sam Kinkaid will give a few examples of what we are doing, because I think there is an awful lot of learning in those and best practices which we are circulating to all our districts. Young people are far more likely to be subject to assault than older people, despite what you see in the papers, they are the most vulnerable group. That is why we do an awful lot about it, certainly in the areas where the young people tend to congregate, certainly for example in parts of Belfast.

If I can just take the licensing issue, we take this issue very seriously and only recently you would have seen substantial fines being handed out to major

nightclub owners for breaking the law, fines of over £11,000 and suspension of licenses for 6 weeks. We have currently 39 prosecutions going through the system for people who have licenses and who are not keeping to the rules.

There is no simple answer to this question, it is all around partnerships working together, identifying the hot spots, initiatives such as 'Get Home Safe' campaigns, youth diversion schemes, dealing with hot spots, dealing with focus patrolling, for example at bus stops, where a number of assaults are identified to take place and using local intelligence. I referred earlier to the national intelligence model, this is exactly the sort of thing the national intelligence model will pick up at a local level. Every district here has an analyst. Every district is looking at crime hot spots and then working out how to deal with them. But in terms of some specific examples, which may just paint a better picture, I will hand over to ACC Sam Kinkaid.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Sam Kinkaid:
Thank you, as there are dozens of examples I could give, I have just selected a few here of significance and one in particular in Coleraine, which we are seeing as best practice that we are trying to get District Commanders to use elsewhere. Naturally, we are continuing the advice that we give to schools and visits to secondary schools to highlight issues and to advise young people on the dangers, for example, alcohol abuse and what type of situations they should avoid which might lead to assaults on them.

As you know, a 'Youth Diversion Scheme' which will replace the 'Juvenile Liaison Scheme' is coming in later this year. This will allow us to deal with young people who are at risk of becoming involved in assaults in the situations that you described. Of real significance for us, is some of the problem solving initiatives that have happened at local district level in trying to deal with this and there are learning examples for many institutions, not just for the police coming out of those.

In Cookstown we have now set up an Alcohol and Crime Working Party which involves the police, environmental health and licensees, which is meeting to try and action crime related issues around young people in the town.

Some of the most significant things have happened in the north west of the province. In Strabane, Foyle and Coleraine districts and in Strabane and Foyle there are well known developed staff supervision schemes for door staff. They have a very important part to play, in terms of the sorts of premises that young people would regularly come to and where there are assaults, both in preventing young people to have access to premises who are under age, but also being able to deal with situations that could lead to assaults.

The one I would highlight to you is the recent one that we have distributed amongst other District Commanders has come out of Coleraine, where the council and the Coleraine district have come now to a best practice, a voluntary best practice initiative. What has happened there is that the council, the police, licence premises owners and what is really important for us, owners of hot food establishments, have all come together to try and bring in a system whereby the people who are attending the town and we entertainment, are leaving in a planned way, and in a way that the police can then maximum resources.

People may not realise it, but one of the biggest locations for assaults in places of entertainment it is not the licensed premises, it is the hot food bars where it happens afterwards. Sometimes, as you know, people may go to various licensed premises that suit their community background then we have a mixture turn up at a pizza place or hot food bar and that is where the problems occur. What we have been able to see in Coleraine is a measured approach to ensure that the timings that the places of entertainment finish at, the timings of hot food bars close at are now co-ordinated. That has been led by the District Commander and the Chief Executive on the council. We believe that this is a plan and approach that can be put to other district

policing partnerships and we have circulated that for District Commanders. There are many other approaches that are taking place, but all in all I think these give an example what can be done to reduce assaults where young people are involved.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Ian Paisley Jnr has a question on the policing of the marching season.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:
Chief Constable, as you know we are approaching the celebration of the glorious twelfth, and King William's crossing of the Boyne and all that and I wonder if you could indicate to us what your policing plan is for the marching season. Could you indicate, I wonder if you do actually agree with me, that it would be much more cost effective for police to protect civilians and orangemen whenever they march in areas like Drumcree and indeed in areas like Dunloy in my own constituency, than it would be much more cost effective to protect them from protestors than it is to implement Parade Commission decisions that seem to be very costly and do not result in anything other than just a stand off?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
Firstly, I do not think I have yet been asked to reinvestigate the Battle of the Boyne, but no doubt it will come in the near future.

Laughter:

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
In terms of the Parades Commission decisions, what I have always said is that we will comply with the law and if the Parades Commission make a determination that is what we have to base our policing activity on and I would not want or wish to move away from that.

In terms of two things, first of all on the marching season. So far I am feeling very positive, the Whiterock parade last week, due to an incredible amount of work behind the scenes and publicly by my senior officers together with communities from all sides of the divide and mediators, inter-mediators worked. It proved that you can accommodate the human rights of everyone rather than one side winning over the other, if that is how it is perceived to be. There is a huge cost of course in policing, which I will come to in a moment, but in terms of the Whiterock parade, I think that sends a very positive message of what can be achieved through sensible and mature debate between people who have different desires to do different things on different days but in the same place. So I think that was a very positive sign and also the Tour of the North before that, reinforces my view.

In terms of Drumcree, I spoke at length this morning to ACC Stephen White and with my senior team who is likewise, with many of his senior players, putting an awful lot of effort into trying to secure some sort of agreement and possibly, as speculated in the press some move forward. That may or may not take place, but currently we are looking at a situation where a determination has been given. We will enforce that determination, we will do it sensitively and with a minimal police presence. But I have to say ACC White has to be in a position to anticipate the sort of behaviour that manifested itself last year and be in a position to respond to that robustly should people decide to break the law, because that will not be tolerated.

In terms of costs, what is interesting at the moment and what is very different to policing public disorder situations in London, it is very hard to determine up until the last minute how any particular community or march will go. So, we have to almost have a lot of police on standby doing nothing, in anticipation of the potential for disorder, whereas my colleagues in other forces could take different decisions and use those officers for community policing. I will ask ACC Kinkaid to particularly comment on Dunloy because it is his territory and it will provide a stark example of that, where we can get agreement, where we can get decisions, where we can get clarity and we have confidence in that,

we can reduce policing of those issues to a minimal public safety level and deploy officers in a far more constructive way. Drumcree last year I think cost at around £600,000, whilst we have looked at and reviewed our numbers this year I will be surprised if it was substantially different from that this year. It is an expensive business, it depends so much on the level of violence and how quickly we can minimise our presence after the initial day or two, to see how it goes, but it is an expensive piece of business, the more we talk with each other the more happy I am. Over a time I think we will be able to reduce the number of police officers and perhaps see some different situation there. In terms of Dunloy I will hand over to Sam.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Sam Kinkaid:
Chairman, Dunloy is an interesting case of how the community's failure to reach an agreement on a parade has massively reduced the ability of local police to carry out other tasks, the very tasks that this Policing Board has set them in terms of policing plans.
We have a run of parades right throughout the year at Dunloy, which I have to resource centrally and the local District Commander has to resource. For example the Easter Sunday parade, we believe at a minimal level it cost us approximately £27,000 to police and a parade by a different order on the 18 May cost us £11,000. You may wonder why there is a difference in the 2 amounts. It is simply that the first particular order was not prepared to give us indications that they would abide by the Parades Commission determination, whereas the second parade did and that allowed us in the May parade to drop the cost from £27,000 down to £11,000. I have a series of other parades throughout the summer and autumn in Dunloy and it is possibly going to take somewhere in the amount of £100,000 from the Ballymoney District budget and from my TSG budget to police those parades.

I would remind everyone here that we, like the Board, are caught quite properly by Section 75(2) in terms that we have a responsibility to carry out our functions in a way that promotes good relationships between people of different religious beliefs and political opinion. So, incidentally, has

Ballymoney Council and the District Policing Partnership in Ballymoney and we have been trying to encourage the accommodation that has been achieved by the people of the City of Derry to be translated into Dunloy. The positive steps that have been taken there in terms of parades have greatly assisted the local police in terms of being able to use many resources for ordinary crime detections and public order preventions in the town centres.

We are hopeful that over a period of time that perhaps more talking in the area of Dunloy will release more police resources to deal with the crime that I think many of the people of Ballymoney will want to deal with. It is costly and £100,000 may not sound a lot of money but Ballymoney is a small district and it is a considerable amount of their resources that are having to be used for this particular event.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:
Have you anything to indicate or anything to say about the fact that the blockage in Dunloy occurs because of a small vociferous, unlawful band of people who

indicate that they want to stop a parade and as a result of that you then put massive amounts of money into a policing situation which probably, if the parade went through the village would be resolved?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Sam Kinkaid:
(Tape unclear) “was previously said, we follow the Parades Commission directions in terms of how parades are going to be conducted,how they are going to take place and which particular routes they are going to take place on. We apply human rights in terms of our tactics in how we carry that out.

I think that the way the District Commander, Superintendent McAuley has handled the Dunloy issue has been very professional and he is trying to

encourage people. There is not a policing solution to the parades in Dunloy. It is a community solution that the people of Ballymoney have to come to, that will assist us in carrying out the parades. I do hold up the example of Foyle and other areas where we have had significant developments, not because of any magic wand that the police have waved, but because we have been able to be involved in partnership with communities to come to solutions that have allowed both residents groups and those taking part in the marches each to feel confident enough about the outcome.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Sammy Wilson has a question on the exclusion of ex RUC officers from facilities.

Mr Sammy Wilson:
Chief Constable, you will be aware of the growing frustration that there is amongst serving police officers and ex police officers about the attempts to try and sever or indeed deny any links at all between the present police service and the RUC. It has been manifested in many ways, but the latest indication of this has been the way in which ex police officers have been banned from using sporting facilities on police premises. I would just like to ask first of all, who did this order originate from. Secondly, why was it deemed necessary to issue such an exclusion order.

Thirdly, was any attempt made in advance to explain the decision to the people who might be affected and is there any plan to review it? Lastly, where there are police officers or ex-police officers who need to use these facilities, very often because they need the training facilities to recover from injuries sustained while they were in duty as police officers, is there any allowance being made to them so they can use these facilities.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Frustration is shared by me, in the sense that it is irresponsible reporting, from people who are uninformed and seem to have no desire to reflect the reality of the situation. There is no plan, overt or covert, to exclude people from police premises who previously served in the police organisation. That has never been the case. There are some issues that have to be dealt with, but the reporting that suggests we are excluding, and I quote 'RUC Heroes' unquote, are simply untrue. That particular report, we did respond to. The paper chose not to even bother to put one line of our response in, but was an unbiased, unbalanced piece of press reporting. Issued sadly, as I understand it, by a retired member of the Police Federation. Now if that member of the Police Federation wished to contact me, I would have dealt with it myself, but he chose not to.

I will hand over to my Deputy who has done a lot of positive work to actually try and put this matter right.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:
As the Chief Constable has said, there is certainly no desire to exclude ex RUC personnel from our premises, certainly not from our sporting facilities, or gym facilities or any other facilities that they wish to use.

I have had a meeting with the Retired Police Officers Association and with the Federation and we have looked at the process. The process that they feel aggrieved by is a security process which has been imposed as a result of security breaches within our premises and it is across the board, it does not just apply to ex

officers. What I have done with them is look at the security process to try and improve that and to make it more 'user friendly', without taking away the fact that there will be a process. We are in dialogue as we speak about this and we are trying to review the process to make it work for them and for us. The indications I have from the Retired Police Officers Association at this point in

time are, that they are very accepting of what we are proposing to do and that we are going to allow them access to gyms. Certainly, those officers who have been injured as a result of troubles and have to maintain a physical regime, we will do our utmost to make sure that they have access to facilities.

Mr Sammy Wilson:
To date no police officers have been refused access to facilities within police stations?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Paul Leighton:
They have been refused access on occasions where they have not had the proper security clearance at that time. There has to be a process, if we came to the Board and said, we allow anybody and everybody to wander anywhere in our premises without any security clearance, unaccompanied, then you would automatically say to us 'you are asking for trouble'. We have to have a process. It is that process and we have admitted to the Retired Police Officers that it took a bit too long to get it into place and it has taken too long to get those clearances through. Once we get that sorted, this will all operate much more smoothly and the Retired Police Officers Association are working with us on this.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr William Hay has a question on the upsurge of republican violence in Derry / Londonderry.

Mr William Hay:
Thank you very much Mr Chairman. This is on the basis on the upsurge of some very serious activity by, as some people want to call them, dissident republicans,

not only in the city of Londonderry, Chief Constable, but I suppose you see it spreading across the north west. I think this Board needs to go on record and

thank those police officers that identified a very serious situation where people had a 1,200 lb bomb ready to go, I think those police officers need to be congratulated for the way they handled that. Quite obviously dissident republicans see the Waterside more than any other area of the city as a challenge to them and certainly as a target to them. Chief Constable, they seem to see the Protestant community in the city as a challenge as well, where they are leaving some of these devices, whether real or unreal.

The question I want to come to Chief Constable is, are you satisfied as that you have the proper resources in place in Foyle to deal with the upsurge of dissident republican violence. Certainly that seems to be on the increase and the other evening when I was on the ground, I felt there was a lack of resources there, if there had of been another serious attempt to try and get a 1,200 lb bomb through or whatever size of a bomb. There is a feeling from people within the city that quite obviously these people are desperately trying to create another Omagh and there is serious concern at the type of resources that may be needed and added to, to try and combat this type of activity that is going on.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
Thank you. I will deal in broad terms and then handover to Sam Kinkaid to explain in detail.

I am grateful of your observations on the work of the officers. It was a superb piece of police work that stopped the 1,200 lb bomb going somewhere. It is also worth remembering, that weekend, if it had not been for the activity of the Garda Siochana a 600 lb bomb would have got in from the south. We could have had 2 of the biggest bombs in the history of Northern Ireland within 48 hours. That shows, our determination to work with the Garda and anyone else that can help us, in terms of the security services, to prevent these things taking place. That does show just how successful we can be, in terms of disrupting those dissident groups that were trying to plant those bombs. Major inroads have been made on their organisation as a result of those

arrests and people are currently in custody as a result of those arrests. So we do take it very seriously, in terms of resources. I will hand over to Sam to deal with the detail of Derry itself.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Sam Kinkaid:
I agree with the Chief Constable, it is fair comment to say that the dissident republican threat in the north west remains very real, as it is in other parts like Belfast and Armagh. It takes up a considerable amount of my time and that of Dawson Cotton, who is the local District Commander. They have been involved in not just bomb attacks, but in murders and as you may well know it does not take an enormous amount of people to cause great mayhem. I regularly review with the local District Commander our approach to that. You may be aware recently, that we put in extra police resources in terms of sector policing. We are also, naturally, reviewing tactics in light of that particular event.

I looked at the resources that were on in the night in question. I was quite satisfied in terms of the resources that were there to deal with it, but having said that, I agree with what the Chief Constable said and yourself, the credit goes to the officers concerned, who were involved in the particular incident and the way they handled it.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
A supplementary question from Lord Kilclooney.

Lord Kilclooney:
The Chief Constable quite rightly mentioned the 2 large bombs in Londonderry at the one end of Northern Ireland and then in Louth/Armagh border at the other end and of course in Armagh City just previous to that we had a very serious attack on 2 members of the PSNI which could have easily resulted in their deaths. Am I right in saying that there is increased support for the Real IRA, for dissident republicans, and that the threat has increased in recent months?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:
In terms of increased support, we do believe as recorded in the papers, that they are actively trying to recruit more members. It is worth reflecting that the people detained in Belfast just before Christmas were young. They were not terrorists from a substantial background. So there is some evidence to support that.

In terms of activity, I think what it does reflect is, that we have been increasingly successful against them and disrupting them, they are still small. I do not think they are very well organised, they have frequently been disrupted. I think the impact of those arrests in relation to the bombs north and south has had a major impact on them.

I mentioned earlier arrests that had been made over 24 hours in Belfast, that shows again in terms of our ability to disrupt, we are still doing pretty well against them. But one can never be complacent. It was an interesting weekend. I could have been dealing with 2 substantial bombs, instead of which we were dealing with 2 substantial successes, but there is a very fine dividing line between the two.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:
Mr Joe Byrne has a final question on the PSNI and the Special Olympics.

Mr Joe Byrne:
Chairman, I think given the fact that the Special Olympics has just taken place, would the Chief Constable outline what was the extent of the involvement of the PSNI with the Olympics. Would he also agree that there was a powerful symbolic demonstration to see the Garda motorbike squad going around Croke Park with the PSNI motorbike squad and that does reflect, I think, the widespread desire there for maximum co-operation between the police services on both sides of this island.

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Well the answer is, in first, the commitment was substantial and yes I would agree. In slightly more detail, the commitment by my officers both on and off duty when all the towns were hosting different countries was substantial. The torch run that went around, was a fantastic catalyst for enabling my officers at a local level across all of Northern Ireland to engage with local communities in a positive way and it broke down barriers. It shows just how committed and professional they were.

In terms of the bigger symbolic events, we had 15 motorbikes, the Garda had 15 motorbikes, but it ended up I am told, the total was 29 because one of them fell off on the way, but the actual symbolic event of them going in, it did show just how good the co-operation was at every level. It was a minor investment, the PR itself you would have paid 10 times what it cost me in terms of the simple figures, the goodwill we received down there was highly impressive. For anyone who had any involvement with the athletics in terms of building their confidence and showing just what people are capable of, I think, as an organisation we would say we were privileged to be involved.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr:

(Tape unclear) ….put into policing the Special Olympics?

Chief Constable, Mr Hugh Orde:

Apart from the opportunity and costs of me actually sending the officers, all the bills were picked up by Special Olympics. So the opportunity costs of 15 officers, 15 motorbikes for 2 days, I would say that was a sound operational decision. That the substantial benefit in terms of how the Police Service of Northern Ireland was seen, not in the south as much as actually in the north. Likewise the torch run, it was not just the PSNI officers, of which there were only 5, there were 5 Garda Siochana, but officers from all over the world were here, it was a huge international event and the Service has been held in extremely high esteem at every single level from governmental downwards.

Chairman, Professor Desmond Rea:

I attended on behalf of the Board, the dinner and gala ball on Saturday night organised by the PSNI and they raised a total of £49,000 for the Special Olympics. It was in itself a most moving occasion and I would congratulate you on behalf of the Board for the amount of money that you raised and your involvement as a Police Service in the what was a very important event for both parts of this island.

Could I say thank you to members of the public and the press, could I say thank you Chief Constable to you and your officers for coming today and taking our questions.