

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD IN PUBLIC HELD ON THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2011 AT 2:00PM WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Mr Brian Rea, Chairperson
Mr Gearóid Ó hEára, Vice Chairperson
Mrs Anne Connolly
Mr Jonathan Craig
Mr Ryan Feeney
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Gerry Kelly
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Stuart MacDonnell
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Robin Newton
Mrs Joan O'Hagan
Mr Brian Rowntree
Ms Caitriona Ruane
Mr Pat Sheehan
Mr Michael Wardlow
Ms Deborah Watters

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Matt Baggott, Chief Constable
Mrs Judith Gillespie, Deputy Chief Constable
Mr Drew Harris, ACC Crime Operations
Mr Will Kerr, ACC Urban Region
Mr Dave Jones, ACC Rural Region
Mr Michael Cox, Deputy Director of Human Resources
Ms Liz Young, Head of Media & PR
2 Representatives, Command Secretariat

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Edgar Jardine, Interim Chief Executive

APOLOGIES:

Mr Conall McDevitt

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Good afternoon and welcome to this meeting in public and public meeting of the Policing Board.

The first hour will deal with Board Members questions to the Chief Constable and then we will move to the public meeting on the issue of human trafficking.

This first session is for Board Members questions only and will focus on a range of policing issues.

Chief Constable, if you could make a brief introductory comment and then we will go straight to questions.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I just want to say thank you to everybody who took part in the conference 2 weeks ago. I thought it was a significant 2 days. It brought people together in an increasing way probably for the first time such a conference was run between the Policing Board and PSNI and we are certainly taking some time out to establish the qualities from that. Much is the endorsement that confidence has to remain at the heart of everything that we do. That step change in accountability that was brought about in the last couple of years is starting to have significant effect, but there is more work to be done together particularly in relation to partnerships and it brought out into the open some conversations around the work we do on security, how we can communicate that better alongside the local policing agenda. So, I just want to say thank you to everybody. I thought there was some great conversations taking place and I know an awful lot of hard work went into that, but I genuinely think it was a step change.

There is a huge amount to do next year. We have the introduction of Community Safety Partnerships, what they will consider. I think there is enormous potential there to take forward that agenda. I had a very, very constructive first meeting with the new Head of the Public Prosecution Service and I think there will be a very much shared desire to bring about a speedier justice system, but also one that is very much focused on victims and the vulnerable.

So, as we come to the end of the year, I want to thank the Board for your support, your encouragement, your challenge where appropriate but also point towards next year as well.

I'm delighted to be able to report, I'm not going to give a full performance report that will be for next month, but just to say at the end of the year we have been talking particularly about the elderly and burglary. One victim is one victim too many, but burglary again is down at the end of this year, in fact all the crime categories are down. Detection rates for some of the most serious issues of sexual offences have actually risen quite significantly and although we are not complacent, you have my assurance that the PSNI will continue to concentrate on those matters that really affect people's daily lives, the quality of our response but also the issues of serious harm.

We are launching this month Chairperson, 2 particular campaigns which I would value the Board's and I know I will have that, full endorsement of. The first campaign which is launched already is really about the drinking and driving over Christmas. There are still too many people losing their lives on the road although this year's figures are down again from last year. It is very, very important that people get the message that they should not drink at all if they are going to drive a motor vehicle and they should make sure people that are actually with them do the same. There is a sort of a self-policing here between people going out having fun at Christmas and enjoying themselves, but it would be desperate to report back in January that we had lives lost because people hadn't heeded the message of 'Don't Drink and Don't Drive this Christmas'. We will be fast tracking people through the court system who are caught drinking and driving, so there is a message there but it is one that I would hope people will adhere to.

The second one which we are launching today is the 'Be Smart' Rape Awareness Campaign. Really, really critical message. It is very much targeted at the age group of 16 to 29. The message for women is 'please, please make sure you watch how much you drink so you don't become vulnerable' and the same to men as well but particularly for potential victims. Message for young men, 'sex without consent is rape'. It is as simple as that. There is no equivocation with this, sex without consent is rape and although we have had a decrease in serious sexual offences this year, it is still too many. We have to deal with the issue of vulnerability, alcohol related crime but a very,

very clear message today because we are determined we will drive down this particular crime.

Chairperson, in the last month, again in terms of serious crime. It was great to be down in Dublin last week at the Organised Crime Conference. A huge amount happening between ourselves and the An Garda Siochana. It genuinely was a coincidence but on the day we had that conference launch, we see the significant quantity of drugs in a Greek port, working again seamlessly with our colleagues in the South that's the future, the PSNI working with our neighbours in an international context driving down serious harm, but even the last month £50,000 worth of counterfeit goods seized at Clogher market, 240 kilos of cannabis seized in Greece. A week ago a 29 year old Chang Li jailed for 6 years for running cannabis factories in Belfast. In relation to crime investigations, yesterday a 51 year old man appeared in court charged with the murder of Margaret Telford in 1988. On 25 November, 4 men plead guilty to paramilitary style shootings in the St James area. That was the matter we discussed with some vigour last month, it is encouraging to see we are actually bringing people to book for that, 18 November, 2 charged with the murder of Lesley White. On 9 November, a 35 year old man charged with the murder of Jonathan Graham in a shooting near Newry. I just say that because the relentless commitment to bringing people to justice for the most horrific crimes but also keeping us safe from serious harm I think is evidenced in that one month's snapshot of events.

Chairperson, again thank you for the work on the conference. Thank you for the challenge of the Board and I invite questions from Board Members. Thank you.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much Chief Constable. Our first question, Debbie Watters. You have dealt with it partly in private session but it is also listed for public.

Ms Debbie Watters:

Thanks Chairperson. Chief Constable, as you know my question is around drug dealing and criminal gangs within the Belfast area and I would just like some comment on that regarding what the police is doing to address this issue. Thank you.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I will just do an introductory sentence, if I might invite Will Kerr to answer that one.

I think what we are seeing with Belfast emerging as a city, is the emergence of a very compelling market place because of the nature of the international dimension and we have to get ahead of it. That is why I was so delighted in my opening address to talk about how we are getting upstream with the drugs trade, not just in Belfast but in Dublin, in Europe wherever it is coming in through the supply routes, it is very, very important that the work of that Organised Crime Task Force is freed up completely to do that. We have to get up stream of the problem before we can get into the actual depth of the street level dealing, it is part of a continuation. So, the combination of that together with the extra 700 on the streets for neighbourhood policing and the greater listening to people particularly in some of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods is very, very critical that's the strategy we have adopted in the Policing Plan and we starting to see that have some effect but I am very mindful there are specific problems in Belfast so I'm going to invite Will to speak about that as the Urban ACC. Thank you.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Thank you and thank you for your question Debbie.

As we chatted about briefly upstairs there is a significant amount of work that's going on at the moment in relation to organised criminality in the Belfast area, and you are specifically asking about East Belfast as well. We have had a number of successes, we have actually got the Head of Organised Crime Branch sitting behind me as we speak and they have been doing a lot of tremendous, very specific operations that have dealt with a wide range of serious and organised criminalities, from money laundering to people trafficking that we are going to talk about later on to the drugs trade. We have arrested and charged more people and we have actually taken more money and more assets of more people over the last year as a result of those operations.

But I know the bit you are equally interested in is at the lower end of the scale before people become more involved in the serious and organised crime. We have shifted our focus organisationally from the crime to the prolific offender which was a recognition of 2 facts. Firstly, the fact that enforcement alone was never going to solve this problem

so we needed to find a smarter way of trying to take the person out of that route long before they actually got involved in criminal behaviour. It also reflected the fact that the earlier you get in and the more agencies, both voluntary and statutory that you can involve in that process, the more effective the response is likely to be because the young people that we deal with at 16 or 17 who have committed minor crimes are also the ones who are known to education and welfare officers, the ones who are known to social services and this is a debate that we would like to see pushed forward with the new PCSPs when they are introduced next year, with a new agenda that joins up those interventions in a more effective way and that we share information more effectively as well.

Effectively what that is about is that we are just trying to provide an alternative opportunity for those young people at a time of significant economic restraint over the next few years so that crime isn't seen as the only paying option.

If I could give you some reassurance around the enforcement approach we have been taking. Prolific offender management works. I mean burglaries are down in 'A' District by another 15% and 'B' by another 8% simply because of that focus, very robust focus on those people who won't take an alternative approach and then we have to arrest, charge and take to the court.

We have also been doing what's called 'Operation Seeker' in 'A' District in North West Belfast which is a bit more strict bail enforcement and more robust enforcement of bail breaches, so there is a lot of very joined up activity going on within the Police Service. The gap that exists at the minute, if I'm being frank, is with a gap between the statutory sectors to make sure that we are joined up and we get in as earlier as we possibly can.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much. Robin Newton has a supplementary question.

Mr Robin Newton:

Thank you Mr Chairperson and I welcome the comments about the holistic approach and involving other statutory and voluntary agencies, particularly amongst young people. I think it is absolutely critical to keep young people out of the court situation

and getting a charge and an offence and once they get that criminal badge it makes it even more difficult for them to be brought back onto a straight and narrow.

But I welcome the fact that the Chief Constable indicated his enthusiasm for the support that he was having with his counterparts in the Republic. Drugs in particular isn't a Republic of Ireland or a Northern Ireland picture, it is a UK wide, continental Europe wide issue. Can we be assured that, indeed in particular around the drugs issue, that there is a sharing of knowledge and experience with your counterparts in GB and indeed, wider afield?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Well yes, very much so. We work very closely with our colleagues in An Garda Siochana in a cross border sense, really to protect the whole island of Ireland, but also then we work with the Serious and Organised Crime Agency on investigations into Great Britain and then into further afield and they provide an international reach for some of the big trafficking investigations that we would have ongoing. But we have to realise that the island of Ireland is viewed as a target area in its entirety by organised crime groups on an international scale and very much on both sides of the border, we have to make sure that we collaborate and share information and intelligence and our collective law enforcement effort to make this in effect a hard target for those international crime groups. We are seen as an affluent society and somewhere where money can be made through crime and we will then remain a target for the foreseeable future.

Also then, just in terms of our work with SOCA (Serious and Organised Crime Agency), we work very closely with them, we do share intelligence with them as we would share with An Garda Siochana and that's covered by various inter-governmental agreements and various MOUs and SLAs and how that's done, but you can be assured that that is day to day practical work that happens all the time.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

(tape unclear)

Mr Gerry Kelly:

Could you give us some notion of the trends are in terms of drugs in the North and maybe particularly in Belfast with these new gangs, have they been going on for a long time? How do you see it in terms of crime in general and what percentage and how big a problem is it?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Drugs still remains the favourite activity of the organised crime groups. It has changed in complexion towards more cannabis growing in 'grow houses' both within Great Britain and on the island of Ireland. In some cases we have been an exporter of cannabis grown here into GB or into Europe, and that's particularly a powerful form of cannabis and is a very dangerous drug in itself, it's a far more powerful drug than the cannabis of say 20 years ago and it brings big profits for an organised crime gang.

Our other drug market is somewhat different. We wouldn't have the prevalence of hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine as you would see even in Dublin, but certainly nowhere near the scale of it that you would see in GB and our market still unusually is focused upon things like ecstasy, in comparison with other places. So, we have a bespoke market which illustrates that you probably have long term gangs who are operating with a product that they are comfortable with and that's of concern.

Organised crime groups very much involved in the drugs trade. There is a growth in other factors as well, human exploitation, human trafficking which we will talk about and that's something of the last 5 years, but other matters then in relation to intellectual property crime and that is counterfeit products etc, laundering fuel, counterfeit alcohol and counterfeit cigarettes and as duty starts to increase on those products, they themselves become very attractive to crime gangs. So, these are all ongoing threats to the health of our society because they do cause real harm, but also to the economic wellbeing of society. It is very difficult for legitimate businesses to compete with other businesses who are in effect selling counterfeit products, be it alcohol, cigarettes or fuel.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Ross Hussey.

Mr Ross Hussey:

Thank you. Ross Hussey has got a supplementary.

Mr Ross Hussey:

The ACC touched on it there wherever we are going onto these other products such as counterfeit alcohol, counterfeit clothing whatever, and in fact the Chief Constable mentioned himself for the recent raid in Clogher market. Clearly this isn't limited to Belfast, it's a province wide type affair. How more reactive will the police be coming up to Christmas for example on this type of behaviour?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Well, you have seen the beginning of it at the weekend. We will continue to keep pressure on this marketplace because organised crime groups don't work with one commodity. If they are dealing with one commodity then in effect they use that money to deal into other commodities and that could be drugs, money laundering for other groups or on into human trafficking. So, all of this criminal funding has to be tackled at every branch and every stage. We also put a lot of effort into the money laundering operations and pursuing assets, not only in Northern Ireland but internationally and of course into Great Britain as well.

So, there is continual effort put in in respect of this. In the run-in to Christmas, the OCTF, the Organised Crime Task Force run public awareness programmes in respect of the cheap products people are tempted to buy. They are offered a bargain but actually they are buying in effect, a very dangerous product. Things like hair straighteners, things like electronic consoles for gaming and these are cheap imitations which are very, very dangerous and create a public harm risk.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Okay, thank you. We need to keep moving. The next question is to do with the cost of policing private sector charity and community events. The Resources and Improvements Committee put in that question and it is going to be asked by Anne Connolly.

Mrs Anne Connolly:

Actually, Jonathan going to lead on it.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Jonathan Craig is going to ask and then Anne will come in.

Mr Jonathan Craig:

Thanks Chairperson. Chief Constable, it has been rumoured now at District level, although I would have to say mainly and actually brought up at a number of DPP meetings, that in future the PSNI is going to charge to police public events, charity events mainly. A prime example would be the Fun Run in Lisburn or I suppose the Marathon that's run in Belfast. Obviously, that would have a major impact on the viability of such events, probably ruling them out. Is there any basis for those rumours or any truth in it?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thank you very much. I will let David Best our Finance Director talk through what we do on this, but I think you will find our approach is somewhat generous compared to elsewhere.

Director of Finance & Support Services, Mr David Best:

There is specific legislation in the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 2000 that we can charge for services provided. We ourselves have got a Policy Statement and it is on the internet, it can be read, on income generation and we also comply with the ACPO policy which is also on the internet. Where we do recover services provided by the police, that's recorded centrally by finance and it is also on the internet. So, if you want to know just go onto the internet and you will see what we have claimed to date.

It is a devolved function you referred to, it came from the local level, but we do try to co-ordinate to ensure there is consistency across the organisation. That doesn't mean it always happens, but that is our aim.

To date we have focused on profit making organisations and we haven't moved into the charity sector and at the moment from a corporate perspective, we have no plans to do

that. If you look at some of the Police Services across the water are charging for football clubs like Man United and they generate quite a substantial amount of income. There was concern that we would charge the Irish football clubs and we are not planning to do that at all. Linfield, Donegal Celtic, we have no plans to go in that direction.

Just to give you a couple of examples. We currently get paid for Belfast City Council have 2 additional police officers in the City Centre. They sponsor that, we receive the money for that. We are charging for commercial events, examples are Planet Love, Party on the Beach, those are commercial run events and we do seek to recover policing costs. We aim to recover all our costs where we feel it is justified but in some circumstances we recover less than full costs, but we have no plans to move and charge in the non-profit sector at this point in time. However, that doesn't mean that in some point in the future we will review that and change it.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much David. Before Anne comes in, if she still wishes to come in, you mentioned Manchester United, I think they were on the news this morning, where they on the news this morning, do you know anything about that? Anne Connolly.

Mrs Anne Connolly:

I think in a sense my question is a little redundant because my question was generally around the whole income generation, given the huge efficiency savings which you have to make and the very high costs associated with these public events. Will you not be looking as a team at how you could maximise revenue, and if so, will you be bringing an Income Generation Plan to the Board at a future date?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

When it comes to the policing of public events, I am very comfortable with the idea that commercial companies making profit should pay for the services of the police in terms of facilitating those events, and where that's appropriate we will do that. So, there are some potential there but it will be with profit making commercial companies.

If we were to do this with some of our lesser high profile football teams, unlike Crystal Palace for example, we would end up with some of those going bust and that's not

about personal policing. But at the moment we are wanting to get into the heart of communities, into the heart of GAA clubs and it is a relationship building, that's what we are about. So, I have no intention at all at this time to charge for charitable functions. I think this is a great opportunity for us to be part of the community, I'm not going to create any barriers to that whatsoever by charging for things that actually should be done in the matter of our ordinary duties and as part of the Policing Plan.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you. Brian Rowntree.

Mr Brian Rowntree:

I would like you Chief Constable to inform the Board and maybe update us on the current use of digital aerial monitoring equipment by PSNI?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thanks for that. Part of our obligation under Article 2 is to protect the public and protect ourselves, that goes alongside the requirement to produce, over the next 4 years, £135m worth of efficiency savings and I create an expectation and colleagues share that, that we are always looking at cutting edge technology wherever that might be of support to us. So, we have been looking across internationally at what is available, what technology has come onto the marketplace. Some of that is in relation to the sort of functions carried out by air support. So, we have been doing our research on that, but at the moment it is at the stage of what is out there and what might we be able to bring to the Board. It would be innovative, it would be potentially contentious, so before we move into any phase of actually firming up an idea to buy some equipment and how we would use it, that will come before the Policing Board.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Okay, no supplementary question on that, I thought maybe Ryan had one? Alright, thank you very much. Next question is from Gerry Kelly, a security breach into the Secretary of State.

Mr Gerry Kelly:

Some of the revelations that are appearing and perhaps more every day, one of them being the hacking into the computer of the previous British Secretary of State, Peter

Hain. We asked you about this before Chief Constable and you said there was no issue, it didn't affect the North at all, well clearly in this instance it has. So, I suppose 2 questions. What was the investigation at the time to find that out? Was it a simple question to the Metropolitan Police or whatever, and what is going to happen now because there would now clearly be a suspicion that if Peter Hain's computer was hacked into that he wouldn't be the only one?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thanks so much. There is clearly a national investigation taking place which the lead is the Metropolitan Police on that. So as things become known, we may well have an involvement in that but I can give you the specifics in relation to how it is taken forward and Drew will do that for us.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

We have yet to receive a complaint that would require prosecution by ourselves. Now this is, as the Chief Constable as said, being led by the Metropolitan Police. If their enquiries take them to a point where these offences have been committed in Northern Ireland and we're not entirely clear where these alleged matters have happened, but if they have happened in Northern Ireland we would be responsible then for the investigation and report onto the PPS. But we have yet to receive information that these offences may have taken place in Northern Ireland.

Mr Gerry Kelly:

Do you need that information before you proceed? Presumably if it's now common knowledge, public knowledge that a high profile person like that was involved.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Well, we would in effect be waiting for the Metropolitan Police to flag that it was not within their jurisdiction i.e. within Britain and they would flag that to us then for investigation.

Mr Gerry Kelly:

Could I suggest we ask the question to them?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

We can ask the question yes.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

We can ask the question, but this is an investigation unfolding in the Met, there are protocols nationally on how a lead agency would deal with other forces when it is shown that the offence took place here. We are still waiting for that at the moment Gerry, we need to wait see. We will obviously be speaking to our Met counterparts but it is probably a bit early at the moment to give you an updated view of where that investigation is.

Mr Gerry Kelly:

Just forgive me for being persistent Chief Constable, but if you remember back we have had in the past phone taps in terms of Mo Mowlam when she was here, Martin McGuinness also I think Tony Blair or Tony Blair's Chief of Staff at the time, so the reason I'm asking for a bit of proactivity on this is that the suspicion is not up in the sky, it is sort of well founded in the past.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

What you are talking about, I was not part of the history so obviously others are better placed than me, but in relation to the investigation, the Metropolitan Police will be following certain lines, certain courses of action and as they do that matters will unfold, in which case if they result back to our jurisdiction, we will take them on but I think we have got to let the Met at the moment continue those lines of enquiry to the point at which something tangible emerges.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Brian Rowntree again.

Mr Brian Rowntree:

Thank you Chairperson. The Secretary of State recently announced that he was assured that there was no matter to answer in relation to the Northern Ireland Office, where you involved in giving any assurances to the Secretary of State in relation to such conclusions?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

No, we weren't involved in that conversation.

Mr Brian Rowntree:

Can we take it that there was no police investigation of any nature into the Northern Ireland Office situation?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Drew Harris:

Well, we had no involvement in that. This will have been investigated actually by the Metropolitan Police and if we had a jurisdiction issue we would become aware of that, so I think we can presume that there was no jurisdictional issue for us to get involved in and therefore no need for us to investigate or take any part in this.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Caitríona Ruane

Ms Caitríona Ruane:

So, just a follow-up question to one that Gerry asked and Brian. What did you base your assurance to us about the phone hacking scandal?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I think I was asked a question, forgive me I haven't got the exact detail, perhaps you could remind me what the question was, but if I didn't have any details of a live investigation I wouldn't be able to give them. Forgive me, I can't remember what the question was and what the answer was.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

What investigation did PSNI do on the security breach of the Secretary of State's computer. Are there any future investigations. That's the current question. I think Gerry is referring to something broader around the investigation into hacking about 3 or 4 months ago.

Mr Gearóid Ó hEára:

Maybe I could clarify it. Debbie Donnelly actually wrote to yourself I believe and asked when the phone hacking story emerged in the press, was there any implications for us here and the answer back was no or not that you knew of.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Not that I knew of at that stage, no that's right.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Okay, thank you very much. Next question Ryan Feeney.

Mr Ryan Feeney:

Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirleach. First of all can I make a comment and then ask a question. I don't think there is anybody in this room that hasn't been affected by the issues of road safety and it is something I personally feel very strongly about. I would say there has been some excellent work done by the Police Service over the last number of years. I have seen it first hand and I would pay tribute to Muir Clarke and his team, in particular John Wilson who has done a massive amount of work at grass roots level, so I would commend the PSNI for that work and say well done.

Secondly, coming into Christmas and the New Year period, just to ask the Service what plans you have in place in terms of road safety policing?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thanks very much and Will will answer that one for me.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Thank you for your comments Ryan and also it is a very timely question. The winter drink drive campaign was launched at the end of November. It runs until the beginning of January. The intent is 4 fold, it is not just to stop people drinking and driving and to catch those that do, it's also to try and address the other 3 main causation factors. We are trying to get people to slow down, drive more carefully and wear their seatbelt and if we get all 4 of those things right we could reduce even further the number of fatalities and injuries on our roads.

I would like to put some numbers to this from last year just to give you the sense of the scale of the problem and the challenge that we still have socially in Northern Ireland. There were over 350 arrests last year in Northern Ireland for drink driving during a similar Christmas campaign. We did preliminary breath tests on nearly 4,500 people now those are with cause preliminary breath tests, there has to be a moving traffic violation or some suspicion that they have had alcohol taken before we can test them. The highest reading was 5 times the legal limit which is quite unbelievable when you consider the effects that that would have on somebody's ability to function, and the ages ranged from 16 up to 80, the average age was in the mid 30s. So, we have been doing a lot of work on this over the last number of years as you are well aware. This will have a cross border element as well. The An Garda Síochána Traffic Core do a lot of co-ordinated activity with us in the counties that are just north of the border as well.

The one thing we are trying to push very hard is that 2 levels of consequence that come out of this type of behaviour. One is individual consequence, the Chief talked about a scheme which we are starting up in the North West in Derry where we are trying to shorten that time period between the offence and the consequence so people will, in all probability lose their licence. It may have a consequence for getting insurance in the future, it may have a consequence with a job if it is driving dependent, but it is the personal consequence for the victim that we are more concerned about. Now, we are not trying to spoil anybody's fun over Christmas, we're not trying to say don't go out and have a few drinks, what we are saying is that we don't want police officers to have to knock somebody's door and tell them their child has been killed or maimed because somebody was so irresponsible and that's the simple message we are trying to put out over Christmas. One drink is one drink too many, don't do it.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Chairperson, we have an update. People may have received their letter or leaflets. We have written to every occupier in Northern Ireland as part of update in terms of the commitments and the letters and leaflets have a very clear page on winter driving safety but also on the drink drive campaigns. There is a message in every household this Christmas about keeping safe which I think is the first time we have been able to do that. It will be updated with a message on our Facebook site as well. So, we do really

mean business on this issue, we don't want people drinking and driving and we don't want people losing their lives on the roads or being badly hurt.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Okay, Ian McCrea wishes to come in with a supplementary.

Mr Ian McCrea:

Chief, you know in previous meetings over the last number of months, I have raised issues around road safety and obviously welcome the campaign that the police are moving ahead with to try and reduce that. Obviously, a main issue for me is the people who are affected by this and many times the forgotten people in that those that are seriously injured. I think certainly for me as someone who represents a predominantly rural constituency and quite a number of small rural roads, the importance of this is probably more so than many cases the motorways and larger urban areas. In that sense obviously to seek an assurance that the rural areas, where it is easier to move about without detection from the police, that those areas will be targeted over this period.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

We have a policy of targeting accident hotspots and areas where people are particularly vulnerable and that will continue. But I wouldn't want to pretend, as I always say a police officer there all the time because it is not possible, that's why we are going so strong this year on education and people taking responsibility for themselves, for their own safety. We will certainly play our part in that and sadly I suspect there will be a significant number of people appearing before the courts for drinking and driving and other motoring offences but we really do have to go for the education response to this one. We are meeting in the next few weeks hopefully, with Ministers in Stormont, Health Ministers about the Safety Centre proposal. We have been planning this for 2 years now, it still needs to go through a series of rather bureaucratic processes and the quicker we can speed that up, the quicker the education side will move ahead with another massively symbolic site called the Safety Centre, so I might be coming back to the Board looking for some support in navigating the rather complex processes that have taken 2 years so far to get through.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

David McIlveen.

Mr David McIlveen:

Thank you very much Chairperson and certainly I too would welcome anything that is designed to save lives over this period in particular and I think you are to be congratulated on that Chief Constable.

Obviously, just connected to that around the whole issue of road safety there has been some criticisms levelled against the police in relation to the catching of people who are speeding, that perhaps the police at times have been a little bit too guilty of concentrating on easy prosecution locations rather than accident hotspots. I wonder would that be a rule that you would be planning to adopt in this campaign focusing on the accident black spots as opposed to trying to secure an easy conviction.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I will let Mr Kerr deal with that one if I might thank you.

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Yes, thank you David. The answer is yes, we absolutely will be doing that and we understand that impact and the public concerns sometimes if they think people are being unnecessarily prosecuted for what is perceived to be a minor offence. The difficulty of course is a minor offence can have a major consequence sometimes and we have to apply a wee bit of structural common sense and that's the whole point behind the introduction, the reintroduction of police discretion, to make sure that we deal with the more minor offences in a more proportionate way to give somebody for whom we think a warning is likely to have some sort of remedial impact, we are quite happy to say 'okay we will not prosecute on this occasion'. Certainly the numbers since we started, well even just the numbers this year - for traffic based offences there are upwards of 5,000 offences this year so far which are non anti social behaviour and lower end criminal offences that we have issued discretionary disposal for, a significant proportion of those are traffic related, so we have been a lot more proportionate, we have been a lot more sensible, but I think sometimes enforcement is the only option

and it is trying to get that balance and I think we have got a better balance at the moment.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Trevor Lunn and then Ross Hussey.

Mr Trevor Lunn:

Thank you Chairperson. Could I just ask you a bit more about breath tests. In what circumstances will you conduct random breath tests, because I have heard it said you are prepared to do them in the case of erratic driving but also actually in the case of perfect driving? Can I take it that, if the police are called to an accident scene over this period in particular running into Christmas, that you will actually breathalyse all drivers involved whether they were at fault or otherwise?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Thank you Chairperson, if I can deal with that. Preliminary breath testing which is the hand held machines that most people will experience and 4,500 experienced last Christmas during the winter drink driving campaign, has to be with cause. So our policy, and it is an unambiguous policy, is that we will preliminary breath test everybody involved in an accident irrespective of whether we think they are at fault or not. We can also preliminary breath test those that we suspect have had a few drinks, just through observations or what we smell when we stick our head in the car window, or if there has been a moving traffic violation, so the circumstances in which we conduct them are very clear but in relation to the response of an accident, our policy is unambiguous.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Does that include passengers?

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Well no, there would be no reason to include passengers.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

A drunken passenger may have caused

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr Will Kerr:

Well no, it would just be the driving offence we would be concerned about.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Ross Hussey.

Mr Ross Hussey:

Again with a policing background, I have had to take drunk drivers home around about Christmas time and I know it is a nightmare for all involved. But generally the families are pleased to see that person at least brought home and it is a sad reality and drink driving is a thing that is a 52 weeks of year campaign and I know the police will continue that campaign, because whilst it is highlighted over Christmas, I know it is something you are continually endeavouring to do.

In relation to speeding I have to put my hand up and say that I recently attended the speeding course rather than take the points, and even the Policing Board Members we are not all perfect. Some think they are, but we are not all perfect.

My main concern in relation to driving are people who drive using mobile phones and it is one of my pet hates. This morning I travelled from Omagh to Londonderry to a meeting and from Londonderry to here, and I would have past at least 6 people who had mobile phones driving. One of the worst things I seen was a fellow driving down towards the city of Londonderry with a piece of paper trying to see where he was going as he was reading the map. Again, I feel that obvious police checks stop that sort of behaviour, police in the area will stop that sort of behaviour. Has there been an increase in the number of people prosecuted for using mobile phones in recent months because it hasn't gone away and it doesn't appear to me to be going away?

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

We're getting engaged in another slight aspect of this, but go ahead Chief.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

I don't have the figures to hand, but I agree with the sentiment. Driving with a hand on a mobile phone is incredibly dangerous and some of the adverts we have been doing

on television with the DOE (Department of Environment) have been precisely about that. You simply cannot have the control of a car if you are texting away at the same time, it is incredibly dangerous.

Deputy Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

Can I just mention that there was a group of young people in the Banbridge area who put together an excellent DVD on this very subject, and it was about actually the point that you were making Chairperson about the passenger distracting the driver, and it was made by young people. The script was done by young people, the acting was done by young people and I would commend the Board to see that and give that project their support. It is an excellent initiative.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Could we get details, from whom could that be obtained?

Deputy Chief Constable, Mrs Judith Gillespie:

From Banbridge DPP.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Banbridge DPP. Joan O'Hagen.

Mrs Joan O'Hagen:

Thanks. Matt you mentioned the Safety Centre and the need for some more discussions with the Department of Health around that. Could you tell me a wee bit more about that and what do you hope it will achieve?

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thanks very much Joan. Well, the Safety Centre concept is not new. It is one that has been held and implemented in many other parts of the UK and elsewhere. Essentially you take all the young people at the key stage in Northern Ireland and you give them an opportunity to go for a half day or a day to a centre that is entirely interactive and covers all the scenarios of road safety, health safety, alcohol safety, safety in the home and the better and more money put into that, the better the displays. We have been able to secure support from a number of international sponsors who would be willing to

put capital into that and actually look at making the thing one of the best there can be. So, there are a number of these. I have helped to run one myself when I was in Leicestershire as Chief. Thousands of young people every year go through. Enormous benefits particularly I think in Northern Ireland because it would be part of the shared future. We would be bringing people together from across Northern Ireland into the Safety Centre.

We intend to take presentations to all the key Ministers on this, not just the Justice Minister, but the Health Minister, Education because it's beyond justice. It's actually about education and wellbeing. I think the problem we have is the way we run, for example, business cases here means that it takes a very long time and people anxied about who actually is responsible and who is accountable and if you get the rules wrong what will happen and my job is just to go out there then get the money and build it and have it done within the year, but I'm now in my third year. So, I want this built, I want 2 of them built and I want them to be the finest there are in Europe which they will be. But I just say that because the next few weeks is about taking the concept again and gaining cross party political support for this and then being able somehow to fast track the processes that we currently have in place, it will be built but I can't say when.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you very much, thank you Joan. There is already a DVD made here in Northern Ireland some of us participated in it with a view to making a bid for safety centres and I know that there were opportunities to visit existing ones both in Wales and in Scotland.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

The project team has been in place for over a year. The DVD was created 18 months ago with myself, the Fire Service and others and yourself Chairperson. We just need to somehow bring about a consensus on this very quickly and then navigate our way through. It is a difficult one because I think the question we are being asked is "why is this a priority" and questions like can you prove value for money?. Well I'm not sure sometimes things aren't as they would be, actually just do it. The value for money for me would be about bringing young people together and education. We have a lot of support for this. I don't want to be over critical, it is probably more the way the business processes work than actually the consensus to do it.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

I think the final call on this is Brian Rowntree again.

Mr Brian Rowntree:

Thank you Chairperson. We have had some emphasis this afternoon on the issue of alcohol, but would the Chief Constable like to comment on the aspects of drugs and how those impact on road safety offences and what the PSNI is doing in relation to drugs and intervening around the drugs issue.

Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggott:

Thanks very much. Clearly, it is a very serious offence to drive whilst under the influence of drugs but I think people mistake that sometimes for illegal drugs. This could be under the influence of prescription drugs, tranquilisers, sleeping tablets and I have a concern that a number of people actually forget, that sometimes through no reason of their own under medication, they may be driving a vehicle whilst under the influence of drugs. The people who are very, very careful about their own level of impairment and they need to be very, very cautious about this indeed.

Chairperson, Mr Brian Rea:

Thank you for all of those questions and all of those answers. It seems we have made up a little bit of time and if we could take just a few minutes to break, the Chief Constable will move to here beside me and we will move into the Board public meeting. As we do, can I remind people that there will be photography taken during this and you have seen photographs being taken earlier than that and if you do not wish to be featured in the photographs, would you please let the photographer know that. So if we could just break for a few moments please. Thank you.