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NORTHERN IRELAND: MURDER ATTEMPT VILE - GOGGINS

8th January 2010 Security Minister Paul Goggins MP has condemned this morning's car bomb attack on a serving PSNI officer at Randalstown.

He said: "This vile attack will sicken people across Northern Ireland. I applaud the work the PSNI are doing to make our towns and cities safer. That work is in stark contrast to those who tried to murder this officer.

"Those who planted this device are to be condemned and anyone with information should bring it to the PSNI so that those responsible can be brought before the courts."

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VEHICLE AND OPERATOR SERVICES AGENCY: ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS ON COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

8th January 2009 The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) has increased the number of dangerous commercial vehicles that it removes from the roads from 28,900 in 2007-08 to 36,500 in 2008-09, but the Agency could make better use of its resources and the effectiveness of its roadside checks is constrained according to a National Audit Office report released today.

[Full report - Vehicle and Operator Services Agency: Enforcement of regulations on commercial vehicles](#)

The Agency is meeting its annual targets to remove dangerous commercial vehicles and drivers from the road, but performance against targets varies widely between regions. VOSA relies heavily on roadside checks to enforce regulations, carrying out around 252,000 checks in 2008-9. VOSA's approach is more effective in targeting vehicles which do not comply with roadworthiness regulations but most accidents are caused by driver performance and driver behaviour. The police are responsible for enforcing road traffic laws and dealing with breaches but the Agency could use roadside checks and operator visits to educate drivers and operators about road safety. It does not have a comprehensive education programme for operators or drivers.

The effectiveness of VOSA's roadside checks is constrained. Some stopping sites are no longer at strategically important locations owing to changes in the road network over time. Sites can also be rendered inoperable by local roadworks or diversions. The Agency's delegated powers to stop vehicles are provided inconsistently across Britain. It has delegated powers in England and Wales but current accreditation arrangements are cumbersome and inefficient. In Scotland it does not have delegated powers yet for legislative reasons. The Department has plans for VOSA to be given direct powers to stop throughout Great Britain by October 2010.

The Agency's ability to target risky commercial vehicles entering the UK is limited by a lack of access to ship manifest and other information held by Government and because VOSA cannot always inspect incoming vehicles at ports. Not all sanctions can be deployed effectively against foreign drivers and the Agency has no direct power to impose sanctions on foreign operators.

Mr Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, said today:

"It is reassuring that the number of commercial vehicles involved in road accidents is decreasing and that VOSA is removing more dangerous drivers and vehicles from the road, but my report raises a number of issues which will concern those who use Britain's roads.

"VOSA needs to focus its resources on those activities and areas where it can have most impact: for example, by looking at where its staff and stopping sites are located around the country. It needs to help to educate commercial drivers and properly identify those vehicles which pose the greatest danger. It also needs to work with other organizations, at home and abroad, to ensure that drivers and vehicles from outside the UK are as safe as those from within the UK."

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency is a trading fund of the Department for Transport. It is responsible for ensuring compliance of commercial fleets with the relevant regulations for improving roadworthiness standards in Great Britain. The Agency does this by inspecting vehicles at the roadside to check their compliance with mechanical and traffic (loading and drivers' hours) regulations; and inspections at operators' premises to check compliance across their fleet and vehicle management systems.

The Agency spent £36.6 million on enforcement of commercial vehicle regulations in 2008-9.

Commercial vehicles make up 7 per cent of traffic on England's motorways and trunk roads. The number of accidents involving commercial vehicles is decreasing, but 17,415 were involved in road traffic accidents in 2008. Nine per cent of vehicles involved in fatalities were HGVs.

Press notices and reports are available from the date of publication on the NAO website, which is at <http://www.nao.org.uk/commercialvehicles2010> Hard copies can be obtained from The Stationery Office on 0845 702 3474.



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The Comptroller and Auditor General, Amyas Morse, is the head of the National Audit Office which employs some 900 staff. He and the NAO are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of all Government departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and he has statutory authority to report to Parliament on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources.

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SCOTLAND: UK COMMITTEE BACKS MINIMUM PRICING

8th January 2009 A group of Westminster MPs has followed the Scottish Government's lead and backed minimum pricing as a key weapon to tackle alcohol misuse.

The House of Commons' Health Select Committee's report on alcohol follows an investigation which featured evidence sessions from contributors ranging from health experts to representatives from the alcohol industry and supermarkets.

Their recommendations call on the UK Government to introduce minimum pricing and new licensing rules modelled on ones already introduced in Scotland.

The Committee expressed 'concern' that UK Government policy was 'much closer to, and too influenced by, the drinks industry and the supermarkets than those of expert health professionals'.

And the report rejects allegations by the alcohol industry and retailers that minimum pricing would harm moderate drinkers as 'not a serious argument' and dismisses claims that consumption levels are not affected by price as 'economic illiteracy'.

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said:

"The critics have claimed that minimum pricing punishes moderate drinkers; that it won't work; and that it's illegal. These claims just don't stack up - and the Select Committee has comprehensively rubbished them.

"Minimum pricing won't raise the price of all drinks - it targets the dirt-cheap supermarket ciders, lagers and low-grade spirits favoured by problem drinkers. By contrast, the responsibly priced products favoured by the majority will be almost completely untouched.

"Robust, independent research has shown that minimum pricing could save lives, cut illness and crime and reduce the massive burden alcohol misuse places on public services.

"Meanwhile, European parliamentary answers have made clear that the European Commission does not object to minimum pricing for alcohol as long as it is proportionate and has clear benefits for public health.

"Minimum pricing is now backed by a broad coalition including the four Chief Medical Officers of the UK, the British Medical Association, the Royal Colleges, all 17 public health directors in NHS Scotland, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, the Scottish Licensed Trade Association - and now one of Westminster's most influential committees.

"It is notable that this report holds Scotland up as an example to be emulated. It shows that we have not been afraid to be at the vanguard of public health policy before - and we can be again.

"I call on everyone who cares about Scotland's health to do the right thing and unite behind the Alcohol Bill."

Membership of the Commons Committee is:

Kevin Barron, MP(Chairman) [Labour]
Charlotte Atkins MP [Labour]
Peter Bone MP [Conservative]
Jim Dowd MP [Labour]
Sandra Gidley MP [Liberal Democrat]
Stephen Hesford MP [Labour]
Doug Naysmith MP [Labour]
Lee Scott MP [Conservative]
Howard Stoate MP [Labour]
Robert Syms MP [Conservative]
Richard Taylor MP [Independent]

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DRIVERS URGED TO CHECK EFFECTS OF MEDICINES

7th January 2010 Drivers will be warned about the potential effects of medicines in a new THINK! campaign launched by Road Safety Minister Paul Clark today.

One million leaflets will be distributed through 2,600 Boots stores while medicine bags will be labelled with stickers prompting drivers to check with their doctor or pharmacist that they are safe to drive while taking their medicines.

This follows a major TV, radio and online campaign in August 2009 to target the irresponsible minority who drive while under the influence of illegal drugs.

Paul Clark said:

"We have already run a hard-hitting campaign to tackle those who drive after taking illegal drugs. But it is not just illegal drugs which can affect your driving. Some medicines may cause drowsiness and impair judgement, increasing the risk of an accident.

"That is why we are raising awareness of the potential effects of over-the-counter and prescription medicines on driving ability with this new campaign and I am delighted that Boots UK is helping us to get this message direct to their customers."

Paul Bennett, Boots Professional Standards Director and Superintendent Pharmacist, said:

"It is vital that anyone taking medicine follows the instructions properly and continues to take their course. However, people also need to take into account the potential effects their medicine may have on their ability to drive."

"Regulations already require that a warning is included in the patient information of every medicine which may have such an effect. However, we hope that providing additional information when people collect medicines will prompt them to find out more from their doctor or pharmacist."

Medicines are important in the treatment and prevention of illnesses. Those taking medicine to treat an illness should follow the instructions properly and continue to take it as directed to maintain their health. Anyone with questions about their medicines should contact a health professional for advice.

If this campaign is successful it will then be rolled out to other pharmacies nationwide.

For more information about the THINK! campaign please visit: www.dft.gov.uk/think/drugdrive

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

Presence of medicine in the body does not mean that the driver is impaired. However, studies in the UK suggest that the presence of medicines in drivers killed in road accidents is around 6% (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1997).

Fitness to drive: a guide for health professionals can be downloaded at: www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/drs/fitnesstodrive

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SCOTLAND: OFFENDERS HELP OUT DURING ICY WEATHER

7th January 2009 Offenders on community service schemes in Fife have been clearing snow and ice from the pavements of a sheltered housing complex.

Fife Council's Social Work Services moved quickly at the start of the cold spell to switch the offenders' usual community clean up work to the more immediate need of helping the vulnerable in their communities.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill visited the complex. He said:

"This is a great example of a council responding quickly during this unprecedented cold spell. They immediately put their community service squads to work clearing the pavements around the homes of the elderly before Christmas.

"The offenders would normally have been doing gardening work or roadside clean ups but this work is clearly a more relevant way to pay back to their community in the current situation.

"I know this work is being replicated across the country. For example, in Glasgow, North and South Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and Highland, squads have been clearing pavements around hospitals, schools and elderly homes.

"In Falkirk, offenders have been helping deliver essential service to the elderly and in Lanarkshire they are helping ensure delivery of aids and adaptation equipment goes ahead.

"As the freezing conditions continue, it is important that we all play a part in pulling together and looking out for those in need. We are already seeing some great examples of this with the various community service schemes including the work being done in Fife."

Work is allocated at a local level and changes on a daily basis, but there are hundreds of offenders being used to help ease the consequences of the recent weather across Scotland.

Here are some examples of the kind of work going on across the eight Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) which cover all local authorities in Scotland.

Fife & Forth Valley CJA

Prior to Christmas Community service in Falkirk have been gritting pavements. In particular they have concentrated on areas around older people's homes and sheltered housing.

Fife Council Social Work Criminal Justice Services, Community Service (Payback) have begun to help with gritting, clearing snow and ice from footpaths around Fife. Initially the project commenced on December 23rd in the Cupar and North East Fife area and over recent days this has been repeated across Fife.

Glasgow CJA

In partnership with Glasgow City Council Land and Environmental Services and the Social Work department, GCSS has deployed a number of community service clients to 4 depots across the city to clear snow and ice from pavements in priority areas (hospital entrances, post office areas, elderly homes and schools). Squads of between 50 and 60 clients will be deployed on a daily basis for the foreseeable future until areas are cleared.

CS clients working with the Greater Easterhouse Regeneration Agency (GERA) have been involved in clearing/gritting paths in their area which include all local Daycare Centres for older and vulnerable people.

In the West of the City, Yoker Resource Centre had offenders clearing the paths into the Daycare Unit for older and vulnerable people, which is next to the Resource Centre.

Lanarkshire CJA



The local authority in North Lanarkshire have been doing a significant amount of work with their corporate colleagues to ensure they are targeting the most vulnerable areas including helping to get the vans out to make delivery of aids and adaptation equipment to help disabled clients cope with everyday life.

Lothian & Borders CJA

CS will be available on Saturday (and subsequent days as required) to clear paths and lay salt.

North Strathclyde CJA

Inverclyde Community Service gardening squad have been involved in clearing pathways and drives for the elderly, churches, voluntary organisations and will continue to do so over current cold snap.

South West Scotland CJA

North Ayrshire Council Community Service have been gritting/snow shovelling on roads and pavements in areas used by older people.

South Ayrshire Council Community Service also have squads out clearing snow at locations where there are vulnerable members of the public e.g. residential homes and sheltered housing complexes. This work will be ongoing while the cold weather persists.

Tayside CJA

Angus Community Service Teams have been clearing snow etc, primarily around elderly homes etc. They are also responding to individual requests through the Council's 'ACCESS' line, again with a priority on assisting the elderly etc. There are approximately 35 offenders involved each week.

Northern CJA

Work parties have been clearing paths and spreading grit at the following establishments Quarry Family Centre, Williamson Family Centre, Aberlour Trust Auchenyell Project, Kaim Court and Powis Community Centre. The following sheltered housing complexes Lewis Court, Taransay Court, Short Loanings, Hilton Court,

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IDENTITY CARDS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS PROGRAMME EXPANDED

6th January 2010 Skilled migrants seeking to renew their visas will now be required to apply for a compulsory ID card, Border and Immigration Minister Phil Woolas announced today, as the roll out of the scheme continues ahead of schedule.

Since the scheme was introduced in November 2008 for students renewing their visa under Tier 4 of the Points Based System (PBS) and people seeking to renew marriage visas, more than 130,000 cards have been issued.

From today, the scheme will be extended to incorporate skilled foreign workers under Tier 2 of the PBS. This brings the roll out forward from April this year and adds around 40,000 foreign nationals a year to those currently being issued with the cards.

Mr Woolas said:

"Identity cards are a secure and simple way for foreign nationals to prove they are entitled to live, work or study in the UK. The biometric data contained on the card ties migrants to one identity and prevents those here illegally from benefiting from the privileges of life in Britain.

"Identity cards have already been issued to more than 130,000 foreign nationals, with a total of approximately 140,000 due to be issued by the end of the financial year.

"We are proud to be working with the Post Office to provide vital extra capacity and speed up the enrolment process. The greater choice this partnership provides for migrants is proving popular and already 1,432 have used the new technology in Post Offices to enrol their details."

The cards – for non-Europeans who are applying to extend their stay in the UK – securely lock foreign nationals to one identity. They will also help foreign nationals prove their right to live and work in the UK while making it easier for businesses to crack down on illegal working.

Foreign nationals living within qualifying postcodes and invited by the Post Office will have the option of providing their fingerprints and photograph at one of the participating Post Offices for a fee of £8 or at one of the UK Border Agency or Identity and Passport Service Offices currently included within the scheme, which remain free.

The Post Office will not be making decisions on whether someone can stay in the UK and detailed checking of enrolment details will continue to be conducted by the UK Border Agency.

Alan Cook, Managing Director of the Post Office, said:

"The Post Office is very pleased to be offering an enrolment service on a trial basis at 17 Crown branches. The trial went live in early November and the technology is working well, with foreign nationals who have gone to participating branches appreciating the ability to enrol their personal details in a secure way at a convenient and trusted high street location.

"We are setting a worldwide benchmark among post offices around the globe in our investment in this groundbreaking technology and we remain committed to exploring further opportunities to provide a secure and efficient enrolment service in our branches as the work can generate extremely useful income to help support the whole of the nationwide Post Office network."

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

The UK Border Agency started to issue biometric immigration documents, known as Identity Cards for Foreign Nationals (ICFN), to non-EEA nationals on 25 November 2008.

Currently ICFN are issued to those applying in the UK to extend their stay in the following categories :

- Tier 4 (students);
- Spouses, civil partners, unmarried or same-sex partners;
- A selection of application types from the 'other category':



- Academic visitors granted leave for a period exceeding six months;
- Visitors for private medical treatment;
- Domestic workers in a private household;
- United Kingdom ancestry;
- Retired persons of independent means;
- Sole representatives and
- Transfer of conditions (for those with existing limited leave transferring details from a passport or other such document into a new document).

The new Tier 2 categories rolled out from 6 January 2010 cover:

- Skilled workers;
- Ministers of religion;
- Sports persons;
- Representatives of overseas businesses; and
- Dependants

It is estimated that by the end of 2014/15 about 90 per cent of all foreign nationals will have been issued with an Identity Card.

The Points Based System (PBS) is the biggest change to the immigration system in a generation. Approximately 80 immigration routes have been consolidated into a 5 Tier system, one of which is suspended (Tier 3).

Tier 1 is for highly skilled workers who do not require a UK sponsor, and are applying for a UK Visa in their own right.

Tier 2 is for skilled workers with a UK Sponsor and a UK job offer. Tier 2 was introduced in November 2008.

Tier 3 is for low skilled workers and is currently suspended due to our ability to meet these requirements from the expanded EU.

Tier 4 is for adults and children with a School/College/University sponsor who wish to come to the UK to study.

Tier 5 is for temporary workers (people coming to the UK to satisfy primarily non-economic objectives). It brings together the application process for temporary workers, providing clearer indicators to the options available and making the immigration routes more transparent.

The 17 Post Offices participating in the trial are:

Aberdeen
Beckenham
Beeston
Bracknell
Cambridge
Durham
Kingstanding
Battersea
Camden High Street
Earl's Court
Old Street
Middleton
Oxford
Redditch
Romsey



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South Shields
Stamford

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NORTHERN IRELAND: WOODWARD WELCOMES UDA DECOMMISSIONING

6th January 2010 Secretary of State Shaun Woodward MP has described confirmation the UDA has decommissioned as hugely significant and a vindication of government policy.

Shaun Woodward said: "This is a major act of leadership by the UDA and further comprehensive evidence of the success of politics over violence in Northern Ireland.

"The road to decommissioning has not been easy. It has required people keep faith with demanding and exacting policy, supported by clear principles built on a total rejection of violence.

"I am pleased that today's very good news from the IICD provides yet more evidence that firmness of government policy, with a clear deadline have produced a startlingly strong outcome, removing some of the most dangerous weapons from the streets.

"For those other groups still intending to decommission, I remind them of my deadline which expires next month. The scheme will end.

"And any other groups, currently engaged with the IICD, should take advantage now of this legislation, putting all their weapons beyond use."

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RUNAWAY CIGARETTE SMUGGLER CAUGHT AND JAILED – STAFFORDSHIRE

5th January 2010 A Staffordshire man who had absconded while on bail, in a bid to avoid appearing in court on charges of smuggling over three million cigarettes, was jailed for three years and three months today, following a successful investigation by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

John Cooper, Assistant Director Criminal Investigation, for HM Revenue & Customs, said:

“This was a well organised plot to smuggle a significant consignment of cigarettes into the UK. It would have deprived the nation of half a million pounds that could be funding public services such as hospitals, schools and care homes. The fact that Harding ran away in an attempt to avoid justice and had to be extradited from France shows that we will take every action possible to pursue those involved in this type of crime. Wherever they may hide we will ensure they are placed before the courts and do not evade the punishment of their crimes.”

He added:

“Tobacco smuggling has a devastating impact on genuine retailers who are having to compete with the black market economy and we encourage anyone with information regarding smuggling and tax evasion to contact the Customs Hotline on 0800 59 5000 or email: customs.hotline@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk”

Neil William Harding, (DOB 16.07.1975), of The Cabin, Knowle Farm, Lea Road, Hixon, Stafford, was stopped at Dover by HMRC officers, on 13 September 2007, when he arrived on a ferry from Calais, France with a cab unit and no trailer.

Harding was subsequently arrested when he went to Newhaven to collect a trailer that arrived from Dieppe. Unbeknown to Harding, Officers at Newhaven had already commenced an examination of this trailer. After removing five sheets of wood from a number of the pallets they discovered cut out sections - ‘coffin concealments’ - containing over three million cigarettes. The cigarettes were all branded GB Classic with a potential revenue loss of nearly £557,000 to the public purse.

The judge issued a warrant for his arrest when he failed to appear at court on Monday, 27 April 2009, for the start of his trial. Investigating officers then discovered that Harding had fled to France and a European Arrest Warrant was issued. He was apprehended shortly before Christmas by French Police in La Rochelle and extradited to the United Kingdom on 30 December 2009 and remanded in custody.

On sentencing today His Honour Judge Scott-Gall said: “It was a significant, serious and sophisticated operation and the evidence against you is and was always overwhelming. Your role was very vital as you were trusted to drive the vehicle”.

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

Details of the defendant include:

Neil William Harding, (DOB 16.07.1975) of The Cabin, Knowle Farm, Lea Road, Hixon, Stafford, was sentenced to three years in prison for tobacco smuggling offences and a further three months, to run consecutively, for absconding at Brighton Magistrates Court today, Tuesday, 5 January 2010. He belatedly entered a guilty plea following his extradition. He was charged under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

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ACPOS: VEHICLE FORFEITURE TO CONTINUE BEYOND FESTIVE DRINK DRIVE CAMPAIGN

5th January 2009 REPEAT drink drivers will continue to face losing their vehicles following the success of a four-week campaign.

During the ACPOS campaign Scottish police forces, Crown Office and the Scottish Government warned that tougher action would be taken on repeat drink drivers and they would face the prospect of having their vehicles taken away.

A further 137 drivers were arrested for being over the legal limit during the fourth and final week of the ACPOS festive drink drug driving campaign. This brings the total number of arrests to 490, of which 47 were found to be repeat drink drivers, four of whom have had their cars forfeited and a further 24 seized pending consideration by the Court.

The incidents include a 56 year old man who was arrested for drink driving on New Year's Day night after police stopped him in Lochgilphead whilst driving a gritting truck.

The number of drivers caught during this year's campaign is down significantly on last year's figure of 654 and down even more on the 2007 figure of 839.

The initiative against repeat offenders is now being continued beyond the four week campaign in an effort to reduce road casualties further.

Kevin Smith, Chief Constable of Central Scotland Police and Chair of the ACPOS Road Policing Business Area, said "Throughout this campaign police officers have been patrolling roads in towns, villages and cities across Scotland to catch those drivers who were prepared to take the risk and drive whilst over the limit. Often they acted on information received from the public"

He added "Although the number of arrests is down significantly we will continue to target those drivers who seek to risk the lives of themselves and others and I am pleased to confirm that we will also be continuing to identify repeat drink drivers to Crown Office in order for their vehicles to be forfeited"

The Lord Advocate, the Right Honourable Elish Angiolini QC said: "The reduction in the numbers caught drink driving throughout the festive period is excellent news. With around a quarter less than last year, it would appear attitudes amongst the minority who persist in drink driving are changing. I am pleased that the added deterrent of persistent offenders losing their cars has helped get the message across and to help strengthen that message I have decided that prosecutors will continue to seek forfeiture for persistent offenders throughout the year.

"While the reduction in numbers caught is welcome, we can never be complacent and prosecutors will continue working with the police to ensure these offences are investigated thoroughly and offenders are prosecuted and brought to justice swiftly."

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said: "This has been a successful campaign. The seizures are working and it is encouraging to see that this no-nonsense approach has resulted in a decrease in drink driving this festive season.

"However, that said we've still seen hundreds of drink drivers caught putting lives at risk. Drink driving is totally unacceptable and it is clear that we need to step up our actions and extend the use of these car seizure powers - and use them 365 days a year.

"These people will find out the hard way that their actions will be met with by the full force of the law. Our law officers have my full backing as it seems that the only way to get through to drink drivers is through tough action."

Drivers caught across Scotland during the final week include:

Strathclyde

Late on New Years day a 56 year old man in Lochgilphead who was driving a gritter truck was stopped by police. He failed a road side breath test, was arrested and found to be over the legal limit. He will appear later at Dunoon Sheriff Court.



On Tuesday 29 December a 48 year old man driving a Skoda Octavia in Bellrock View, Glasgow, was arrested for drink driving. Due to a previous drink drive conviction he was kept in custody until his appearance at court when his vehicle was seized pending forfeiture.

A 22 Year old male, driving a Renault Clio in Lawrie Street Larkhall during the early hours of Wednesday 30 December was arrested for drink driving and due to a previous drink drive conviction was detained in custody for court. He pled guilty at court and the vehicle is now subject of forfeiture.

On Hogmanay a 34 Year old man driving a Vauxhall Vectra in Springburn Road Glasgow was found to be over the limit. He was arrested and kept in custody due to a previous drink drive conviction.

In Airdrie a 46 Year old man driving a Ford Transit was arrested on New Years day. He had previous convictions and a pending case for a similar offence. He was detained in custody for court.

In Maryhill Road Glasgow a 47 year old man driving a Toyota Auris was arrested for drink driving on January 2. He had a previous drink drive conviction for and will appear from custody on 5 January.

Fife

About 2030 hours on Monday 28 December a 19 year old man was arrested after stealing his grandmother's car and colliding with wheelie bins near Kelty. He failed to provide a roadside breath test and was also reported for taking and driving away the car, disqualified driving, drink driving and careless driving all of which were committed whilst on bail.

About 2350 hours on Tuesday 30 December a 24 year old man was arrested after stealing a car in Glenrothes. He was reported for taking and driving away the car, drink driving, and provisional driving licence offences.

Grampian

The following three incidents took place on Friday 1 January 2010.

A 17 year old male driver caught in Aberdeen had only passed his driving test one month ago.

A 24 year old male driver caught in Fraserburgh was caught after colliding with a parked car.

A 23 year old male driver caught on the A90 between Peterhead and Aberdeen, was driving a stolen car.

All the drivers caught this week were male and 69% of them were Young Drivers aged 17 – 25.

Lothian & Borders

About 0230 hours on Saturday 3 January, following an unrelated incident in the Hawick area, police officers came across a single vehicle collision where the vehicle was being recovered from a ditch. The driver of the vehicle, a 27 year old male, at this time provided a positive breath test and the driver responsible for the original collision, again a 27 year old male, was subsequently traced and he refused to provide a breath test. Both were released on undertakings

Tayside

On Wednesday 30 December a 49 year old man was arrested for drink driving in the Strathmartine area of Dundee. He was also found to be a repeat offender and the issue of vehicle forfeiture is currently being considered

On Friday 1 January 2010 a 23 year old woman was fatally injured in Dundee after being struck by a car. The 17 year old male driver was arrested and reported for drink driving and a number of other road traffic offences.

Figures for Scottish forces (figures in brackets show repeat offenders)

Central 5 (0)

Dumfries 2 (0)

Fife 6 (0)

Grampian 13 (0)

Lothian & Borders 12 (0)

Northern 11 (0)



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RUNAWAY CIGARETTE SMUGGLER CAUGHT AND JAILED – STAFFORDSHIRE

5th January 2010 A Staffordshire man who had absconded while on bail, in a bid to avoid appearing in court on charges of smuggling over three million cigarettes, was jailed for three years and three months today, following a successful investigation by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

John Cooper, Assistant Director Criminal Investigation, for HM Revenue & Customs, said:

“This was a well organised plot to smuggle a significant consignment of cigarettes into the UK. It would have deprived the nation of half a million pounds that could be funding public services such as hospitals, schools and care homes. The fact that Harding ran away in an attempt to avoid justice and had to be extradited from France shows that we will take every action possible to pursue those involved in this type of crime. Wherever they may hide we will ensure they are placed before the courts and do not evade the punishment of their crimes.”

He added:

“Tobacco smuggling has a devastating impact on genuine retailers who are having to compete with the black market economy and we encourage anyone with information regarding smuggling and tax evasion to contact the Customs Hotline on 0800 59 5000 or email: customs.hotline@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk”

Neil William Harding, (DOB 16.07.1975), of The Cabin, Knowle Farm, Lea Road, Hixon, Stafford, was stopped at Dover by HMRC officers, on 13 September 2007, when he arrived on a ferry from Calais, France with a cab unit and no trailer.

Harding was subsequently arrested when he went to Newhaven to collect a trailer that arrived from Dieppe. Unbeknown to Harding, Officers at Newhaven had already commenced an examination of this trailer. After removing five sheets of wood from a number of the pallets they discovered cut out sections - ‘coffin concealments’ - containing over three million cigarettes. The cigarettes were all branded GB Classic with a potential revenue loss of nearly £557,000 to the public purse.

The judge issued a warrant for his arrest when he failed to appear at court on Monday, 27 April 2009, for the start of his trial. Investigating officers then discovered that Harding had fled to France and a European Arrest Warrant was issued. He was apprehended shortly before Christmas by French Police in La Rochelle and extradited to the United Kingdom on 30 December 2009 and remanded in custody.

On sentencing today His Honour Judge Scott-Gall said: “It was a significant, serious and sophisticated operation and the evidence against you is and was always overwhelming. Your role was very vital as you were trusted to drive the vehicle”.

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

Details of the defendant include:

Neil William Harding, (DOB 16.07.1975) of The Cabin, Knowle Farm, Lea Road, Hixon, Stafford, was sentenced to three years in prison for tobacco smuggling offences and a further three months, to run consecutively, for absconding at Brighton Magistrates Court today, Tuesday, 5 January 2010. He belatedly entered a guilty plea following his extradition. He was charged under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

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NEW MPA CASH SUPREMO TAKES UP POST

4th January 2010 Bob Atkins has today (4 January 2010) taken up post as Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Authority. He will play the lead role in managing an annual budget of over £3.5 billion and scrutinising the Met's use of resources.

Kit Malthouse, vice chair of the MPA, said:

"Bob gave a knockout interview: with sixteen years in the business he knows all the tricks and can see through any smoke and mirrors easily. I am looking forward to him joining the team as we grapple with the budget in our quest for value and focus."

Commenting on his appointment, Bob Atkins said:

"After a long career in local government, my last sixteen years working with the police service has been the most interesting and rewarding time. Working for the Metropolitan Police Authority cannot fail to live up to my expectations. It goes without saying that I am delighted to join the MPA, and look forward to helping the members and staff of the Authority in their vital role of providing Londoners with the best possible police service in the challenging times that lie ahead."

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

Bob Atkins' biography:

Born in North London, Bob commenced his local government career in 1966 with the London Borough of Camden. In 1978 he moved to Fenland District Council and subsequently worked for Portsmouth City Council (1980), Wiltshire County Council (1984) and Buckinghamshire County Council (1989).

He was appointed as Deputy Treasurer of Thames Valley Police Authority (the largest non-metropolitan authority in the country) in 1993 and took over as Treasurer in 2003. He was Honorary President of the Police Authority Treasurers' Society (PATS) in 2004/05 and is a PATS Adviser to the Association of Police Authorities (APA); this entails being lead advisor to the APA Board and the portfolio includes the 2012 Olympics, police authority inspection, protective services, governance and audit.

Bob has lectured extensively for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA), PATS, regional and other groups, covering topics ranging from 'the meaning of Lent' to the 'Auditing of Contracts'.

In his leisure time, Bob is an ordained priest in the Church of England, with a wife and four grown up children. In his youth, Bob was a keen sportsman, but is now reduced to watching from his armchair!

Jacqui Jones: 020 7202 0217

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Website: www.mpa.gov.uk

Met Forward is the MPA's strategic plan to make sure the Met will:

- fight crime and reduce criminality
- increase public confidence in policing
- achieve better value for money

To find out more go to www.mpa.gov.uk/publications/metforward/

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DENHAM - COMMUNITY CONTRACTS TO IMPROVE LOCAL SERVICES

4th January 2010 Communities Secretary John Denham today called on councils to sign community contracts with local residents as a way to drive up the standard of local services – including providing redress when things go wrong - and announced support to help them to do it.

Community contracts - or neighbourhood charters - are voluntary written agreements between residents and local services setting out clear standards of service and priorities for action as well as the role local people can play in helping the services achieve this.

Local services and residents work together to identify their priorities for the neighbourhood. These can include issues that are important to them such as anti social behaviour, litter, graffiti or street lighting. The contracts could also cover methods of redress when standards are not met ranging from a commitment from the council to solve the problem to considering financial compensation.

Evidence shows community contracts work. Eleven areas across the country have already piloted community contracts and an evaluation of the programme – published today – shows they can help local people understand what services they are entitled to, build better relationships with their councils and as a result secure improvements to services and neighbourhoods.

New guidance will set out practical advice on how councils and other services can develop and maintain contracts. A new online discussion forum will also be available on the IDeA's (Improvement and Development Agency for local government) website where people can share experience and good practice. Mentoring support will also be offered to areas wishing to develop contracts that are part of the Connecting Communities initiative - a £12million Government programme set up to help address the concerns of traditional working class communities.

Community contracts are another way of securing high quality local services people are entitled to. Over the past six months the Government has set out new measures to give greater powers to local people through:

- personalised budgets giving patients the right to more control over their care and the services they can ask for;
- rights to be consulted on services such as local policing, anti social behaviour;
- ensuring councils respond to petitions and tell residents what action is going to be taken to address their concerns; and
- enhanced scrutiny powers.

John Denham said:

"Community contracts are an important way for local people to tell councils and agencies about what matters to them and to get action taken on the issues that matter most to them. New guidance and support being provided will make it easier for local residents and service providers to get involved.

"Local councils and agencies provide vital services that affect our everyday lives. It is important they take account of the views of the people from the communities they serve."

There are already examples of community contracts working across the country for the benefit of local people. These include:

Residents on an estate in Sunderland have developed a Clean Green Safer contract with Home Group (the Registered Social Landlord that owns the estate) and a wide range of partners. Since the development of the contract the residents association has reported a drop in complaints about crime and anti-social behaviour, and litter picks, garden tidy ups and an annual garden competition have led to improvements in the local environment.

Residents in Oldham were concerned about crime and anti social behaviour. Working with the partners including the police and local councils they agreed how they would respond to and reduce crime in the area including what residents would do to report and prevent it. Residents involved in the scheme report a reduced fear of crime, improved relationships with police community safety officers and an increase in their perception of police visibility in the area.



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In Barnsley residents were concerned about vandalism and litter problems. They worked with their council on a community contract to clean up their neighbourhood. Residents including young people act as community champions and provide regular feedback to service providers. People report that vandalism, graffiti and litter problems have reduced and the percentage of people saying they are satisfied with local services has increased.

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

Community contracts are also known as neighbourhood agreements or local charters. Communities and Local Government ran a pilot programme in 11 areas from January 2008 which was managed by the National Association of Neighbourhood Managers. The areas were:

Eastern Road, Brighton
Fairstead, West Norfolk
Oldington and Foley Park, Worcestershire
Hathershaw and Fitton Hill, Oldham
Plains Farm, Sunderland
Croft and Cowpens Quay, Northumberland
Springwell, Gateshead
Athersley and New Lodge, Barnsley
Lewisham, London
South Bank, London; and
Manton, Bassetlaw

The evaluation is available on the Communities and Local Government web-site - www.communities.gov.uk

IDeA's online discussion forum offering support will be available later this month. CLG guidance setting out advice on developing contracts will be published in the Spring.

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CAMPAIGN WARNS DRIVERS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SPEEDING

4th January 2010 A £1.4m THINK! campaign to highlight the devastating consequences of speeding for drivers as well as victims starts today.

The campaign's message is that if you kill someone while speeding you will be tormented by it forever. In the television advert a driver is haunted by images of the child he has killed - seeing his body in the bathroom mirror, through the window of a bus and when in the park with his son.

Paul Clark, Road Safety Minister, said:

"Speed kills. Nearly 600 people were killed in 2008 in accidents where someone was driving too fast.

"This campaign highlights the consequences of speeding for the driver involved: what is life like for the driver who kills because they are in a rush to get home and how does that split second decision affect the rest of their life? I hope this campaign will get drivers to kill their speed before it's too late."

The THINK! campaign - 'Kill your speed, or live with it' - includes TV, radio, and cinema advertising.

The radio adverts - 'Always There' – feature a chilling message from 'beyond the grave'. Children's voices describe what life is like for the driver who killed them while speeding several years ago. The drivers cannot sleep, watch a football match or spend time with their own children without thinking of the dead child.

The 'Kill your speed, or live with it' campaign first ran in February 2009 and is just one of the Government's initiatives to further cut the number of people killed or injured on Britain's roads. In addition, the Department for Transport has recently announced an independent review of the law on drink and drug driving. For both drink and drugs, the study will also consider the likely impacts of any changes on driver behaviour, and the practical steps needed to support the introduction of any new or revised offence.

UKPolicing.info notes . . .

TV, radio and cinema advertising will run from 4th - 31st January after 7.30pm.

Radio script: 'Always There'

Boy: He goes to work, I'm there.

At the weekends, I'm there.

On holiday, building sandcastles. I'm there, beside his son.

At night, he tries to forget. But I'm always there.

I'm the boy he killed 5 years ago, because he was speeding. And now he has to live with it.

THINK! – It's 30 for a reason.

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SCOTLAND: WILDFOWLING BAN

3rd January 2010 Shooting certain species of wildfowl has been temporarily suspended because of the severe weather across the country.

Species such as ducks, geese and shore waders are unable to feed in the current freezing conditions, threatening the birds' natural survival.

The suspension, brought into force under Section 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through an order signed today by Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham, prohibits the shooting of birds from 00:01am on Tuesday, January 5. It will last for 14 days but will be reviewed after seven days.

Species covered by the order, are:

- Coot
- Tufted Duck
- Gadwall
- Goldeneye
- Canada Geese
- Greylag Geese
- Pink-footed Geese
- Mallard
- Moorhen
- Pintail
- Golden Plover
- Pochard
- Shoveler
- Common Snipe
- Teal
- Wigeon
- Woodcock

Wildfowling is the practice of shooting ducks, geese, or other waterfowl for sport or food.

Scottish Ministers have been advised by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), their statutory advisers on nature conservation matters, that there should be a temporary halt on wildfowling until the severe weather ends.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation have been consulted about the making of the Order, the need for which will be reviewed after it has run for seven days.

The criteria and arrangements for shooting bans in severe weather were drawn up in 1982 by a working group set up by the former Nature Conservancy Council, which included shooting, conservation and scientific interests. Their report, which was accepted by the Government, called for the decision on an Order banning shooting to be made after 13 days of continuing frost as recorded by more than half of a particular selection of meteorological stations and for the ban to come into effect on the 15th day. Severe weather bans apply to all birds listed on Schedule 2 Part I to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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