

Joint thinking, joint working

Forces unite to combat criminals on Yorkshire and Humber roads

The four Yorkshire and Humber forces are today launching a unique police team to deter and intercept any criminal who uses the region's road networks.

The Regional Roads Policing Team has been set up to deny criminals the use of the region's roads and tackle offenders who cross force boundaries to commit crimes.

The team will also tackle criminals who use roads to commit serious and organised crime. And officers will work to reduce the risk of death and injury on the region's roads.

The Regional Roads Policing Team, which is one of the first of its kind in the country, will be based at three locations.

The Central Team, launched today, is based in the Wakefield area. A North Team, based in North Yorkshire, and a South Yorkshire-based South Team, will be launched later this year.

The Regional Roads Policing Team will use automated number plate recognition (ANPR) technology from fixed-camera sites and from cameras in vehicles. Officers will also use the Regional Intelligence Unit in Wakefield to track down travelling criminals and those involved in serious and organised crime.

South Yorkshire Police Chief Constable Meredydd Hughes, speaking on behalf of the four Yorkshire and Humber chief constables, said: "All four forces are committed to targeting serious criminals and saving lives on our roads. By working together, we can create a Regional Roads Policing Team which is a cost-effective way to fight crime - good news for the police and the tax payer.

"The launch of the team follows the success of previous regional working between the Yorkshire and Humber forces through Operation Impact. We know that by working together we can be more effective than if we work separately. Together, with the Highways Agency, we are determined to give the public the safest possible roads."

Chief Inspector Mick Hunter, who heads the new team, said: "If you are a criminal who moves from one force area to another to commit crimes then you can expect the Regional Roads Policing Team to be coming after you. Criminals will no longer be able to transcend force boundaries to get away with committing crimes.

"The difference with the Regional Roads Policing Team compared with existing force roads policing teams is that they are not traffic officers looking for people committing traffic offences. This team is looking for people who specifically use the region's road networks to commit crimes – be that a burglary in Barnsley or drug dealers using the M1."

Charles Perryman, Chair of South Yorkshire Police Authority and link member for the strategic roads policing project, said: "Today is a cause for celebration because, with the launch of the strategic roads policing project, the public will now be able to see visible evidence of the police forces in Yorkshire and Humberside working together to deal with criminals whose activities take them beyond force boundaries.

"This approach towards policing the region's roads will deliver performance improvements and represents good value for money for local taxpayers across Yorkshire and the Humber.

"It also shows that it is possible for forces and authorities to work together more efficiently than they could individually to tackle these sorts of crimes."

Ends

Background information

The new Regional Roads Policing Team has been born from recent national thinking about how greater collaborative working between forces on certain issues can lead to a better overall service for the public.

In Yorkshire and The Humber this approach has already been put to the test - and passed with flying colours.

Last September as part of the Maximum Impact on Crime campaign, around 100 officers from South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Humberside Police came together for strike days in each of the counties.

The unique link-up, aimed at denying criminals the use of the roads, resulted in dozens of arrests, the recovery of cannabis and cocaine and the seizure of more than 50 uninsured vehicles.

Now with the launch of the new team, last year's success is set to be repeated on a regular basis.

The team, costing a total of several million pounds from the four police authorities, will be operating from three locations by the end of the year.

The central base is launched today (17/9/08) in Wakefield, while the north, at Tadcaster, should be up and running in November and the south, at Sheffield, is expected to be operational by December.

Each base will have a mixture of dedicated officers from the North, West and South Yorkshire forces, which will come under their own command unit, located at the Highways Agency North East Regional Control Centre, also in the Wakefield area.

The officers will use sophisticated technology and intelligence fed by all four regional police forces and other organisations, that will drive the team's pro-active operations to cut the number of criminals on the counties' roads.

The team, made up of more than 25 officers, will focus on disrupting serious and organised crime and threats to security.

However this more complete approach will also mean that police across the region are better prepared to deal with unfolding incidents like robberies or kidnaps, besides providing an increased police presence on the road network.

A fourth base, in Humberside, is expected to be launched next year.

The new Regional Roads Policing Team is in addition to services already provided by individual forces and will mean extra capacity and capability for forces right across Yorkshire and The Humber.

Notes:

Q: Why is the team's command unit based at the Highways Agency RCC?

A: The Highways Agency is responsible for road safety and traffic flow. The latter especially could be affected by the team's operations, so it makes sense for the new team to work with one of its main partners.

Stephen Chamberlain, Regional Operations Manager in charge of the North East Traffic Officer Service, said: "We welcome the arrival of the team to the Highways Agency North East Regional Control Centre. It will undoubtedly further improve the close working relationship we have with the police forces from across the Yorkshire and The Humber area."

Background information on the Traffic Officer Service:

The Traffic Officer Service in the North East has 200 traffic officers patrolling all motorways across the region with up to 12 two-person patrols per shift around the clock.

The NE Regional Control Centre (RCC) is based just off Junction 39 the M1 at Calder Park, Wakefield. The 24/7 RCC is responsible for co-ordinating traffic officer activities across the region - monitoring conditions across the network from cameras and sensors.

On road traffic officers and supervisors are based at five 'outstations' across the network including Hartshead and Calder Park (West Yorkshire), Barton and Carville (covering North Yorkshire and the North East), and Sprotbrough (South Yorkshire and The Humber).

Background information on working of the region's police authorities:

A police authority's role is to ensure policing services are provided efficiently and effectively, to represent the views of local people and to hold their respective chief constables to account.

The four police authorities within the region (West, South and North Yorkshire and Humberside) have been working hard together for some time. They have formed a joint committee with the aim of encouraging and overseeing collaboration between the four chief constables to improve the capacity and capability of their forces to deal cost effectively with higher level threats and more serious and organised crimes without the need for expensive mergers.

Work has been going on behind the scenes on a range of projects but the Regional Roads Policing Team is the first to be visible to the public.

The project also puts the police authorities and forces in the region at the forefront of collaboration nationally.

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