

**Northern
Constabulary**
Protect and Serve Dion is Cuidich



Northern Constabulary Corporate Media and Communications Strategy 2008-2012

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Northern Constabulary

Corporate Media and Communications Strategy 2008 - 2012

Aim: To promote public confidence in Northern Constabulary, and in the Highlands and Islands as a safe place to live and work, and to support the delivery of the Force's strategic objectives, through effective external and internal communication methods.

1. Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to outline a media and communications strategy, which identifies a common aim for corporate communications and sets out a key set of objectives for developing and maintaining a consistent and positive approach to media and communications issues, which will help to achieve that goal.

This Strategy document describes a background of national and local policy context and sets out its aim, based on that context.

2. Context:

2.1 Background

Northern Constabulary serves a widely dispersed population of around 300,000, spread over the largest Police Force area in the UK and incorporating some of the most challenging geographical terrain and road infrastructure. The population is spread over many small communities, with a number of larger centres of population, the largest being Inverness with a growing population of around 70,000. The demography of the Highlands and Islands reflects an historic migration of people from other parts of Scotland and the UK, but there has been a recent influx of people from EU states and there are substantial seasonal increases in the population from tourism. There is a small proportion of languages other than English spoken. These include Gaelic, Polish, British Sign Language and Cantonese.

The population shows an ageing trend with approximately half of the population above the age of 44. Unemployment has been consistently lower than the Scottish average, although the economic downturn has impacted on the region in recent months.

Crime rates are one of the lowest in the UK. Northern Constabulary enjoys strong public support and a highly regarded corporate reputation, as identified in the Policing Plan, with its targets and objectives reflecting the particular needs of communities and a commitment to highly visible community policing. The local media is an integral part of local communities and policing and crime are possibly among the most topical and potentially contentious news issues. The relationship between the Force and local media outlets is generally very positive and can be very productive, especially in small communities.

The media is one of the most effective tools in engaging the public to report crime and a fundamental element in reflecting the reputation of the organisation. Effective communications can harness the media to great effect and value by:

- Publicising public information
- Providing public reassurance
- Disseminating safety and advice messages
- Communicating and explaining policing policy
- Supporting crime prevention
- Publicising appeals for information
- Enhancing reputation by promoting a professional image
- Balancing unfair or untrue media criticism
- Warning and informing during a major emergency

Effective Website communications are essential and Social networking and e-media cannot be ignored as technology is rapidly changing and it is imperative that Forces harness modern methods of communication.

Another key component which impacts on the Force's reputation and achievement of goals, is how members of staff, as individuals, present themselves professionally as the public face and Ambassadors of the organisation.

2.2 National Policy:

One of the Scottish Government's strategic objectives is to make Scotland SAFER AND STRONGER - "...To help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer place to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life."

National Policy themes translate into key themes for Northern Constabulary's communication strategy:

- **Safer, Stronger** – Working with partners to ensure the Highlands and Islands is a safe place to live and work
- **Tackling Crime** – To prevent and deter crimes and pursue organised crime with vigour, tackle underage drinking and knife carrying
- **Increasing Policing Capacity** - Recruitment to increase front-line policing
- **Instilling a culture of Responsibility** – Promoting good behaviour as well as punishing bad is a shared responsibility. The force must work with partners and communities to tackle the causes of crime - drugs, drink and deprivation.
- **Visibility and Reassurance** – Promoting public confidence and tacking fear of crime
- **Efficiency** - cutting bureaucracy, streamlining processes, exploiting new technology and improving accountability

The national context also includes ACPOS initiatives and campaigns, Scottish Government campaigns, SPSA initiatives and mutual aid with other Forces.

The Force also liaises closely with the Scottish Government, the Civil Contingency Unit, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Information Commissioner over communication issues.

2.2 Force Policing Policy:

The Corporate Media and Communications Strategy aims to support Northern Constabulary's goal, strategic plan (2009-12) and local policing policies.

Northern Constabulary's goal is to:

Make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of the Highlands and Islands through a problem solving approach to community policing.

The Force's Strategic Priorities (2009-12) are:

- Safer roads
- Reducing Crime
- Tackling Serious Crime
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Maintaining Public Order
- Modernising our Services
- Developing our People and Becoming an Employer of Choice

3. Our Aim:

To promote public confidence in Northern Constabulary, and in the Highlands and Islands as a safe place to live and work, and to support the delivery of the Force's strategic objectives, through effective external and internal communication methods.

4. Our Values and Principles

4.1 Our Values

Northern Constabulary will:

- Discharge our duties with honesty and integrity
- Provide visible, accessible and responsive services, which meet the needs of our communities
- Be fully committed to partnership working
- Act fairly, impartially and without prejudice
- Perform our duties in an open and transparent manner and be open to scrutiny
- Provide excellent services that meet the needs and informed expectations of our customers
- Ensure integrity and professional standards are given the highest priority

Northern Constabulary values strong public and community support and the community style policing means that officers are an integral part of communities in the Highlands and Islands. The local and regional media are also an integral part of that community and a vital conduit for communicating important public messages.

Northern Constabulary's policy is to be open and transparent and to work in partnership with communities and public agencies. A Media Protocol sets out how the Force will engage with the media.

4.2 Key Principles for external communication

- To be fair, transparent and open and respect the right of the media to represent all views on any given issue.
- To promote Northern Constabulary as a highly visible, community based police force which is visible, approachable and accessible to people
- To establish and maintain a positive, informed and clear profile for Northern Constabulary
- To establish clear communications with partner organisations and provide public information and reassurance in the event of critical incidents
- To maintain clear lines of communication and agree protocols for the release of information and appeals during investigations
- To operate within statutory legislation, the Lord Advocate's Guidelines and ACPOS Media Guidelines
- To forge strong, professional links with local media outlets.
- To correct and rebut untruths and imbalanced reporting
- To maximise opportunities to reach all relevant audiences by using various communications methods, eg local radio, community websites, voluntary groups etc.
- To take account of diversity and language needs using a range of methods
- To address local concerns
- To ensure that communities and audiences of the Highlands and Islands are well informed about Northern Constabulary's strategic priorities
- To warn and inform the public in line with the Civil Contingencies Act

5. Our Audiences

- The public of the Highlands and Islands
- Scottish Government and Home Office
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- Specific groups eg vulnerable, hard to reach, minority groups, young people, road users
- Other language users, in particular Gaelic, Polish and Deaf communities (*The Force Gaelic Language Plan is under development*)
- The Constituent Councils
- Elected Representatives (Councillors, MSPs, MPs)
- Employees of Northern Constabulary
- Northern Joint Police Board members
- Community Councils and Ward Fora
- Partner Organisations: including HIFRS, SAS, NHS, HIAL, Coastguard, Voluntary Organisations
- ACPOS and APPRO
- Other Forces
- The Local, Regional and National Media
- Pressure groups
- Tourists, Visitors and potential investors
- Victims of Crime
- Perpetrators of crime

6. Our Key Messages

Public Reassurance and Reputation

- The area of the Highlands and Islands is the safest place to live in the UK with low crime
- Detection rates are excellent – one of best in UK across all crimes
- Northern Constabulary is tough on organised crime and uses proactive intelligence led methods to target serious crime, with a proactive and robust stance against drug dealing
- The Force is proactively tackling the causes of crime and antisocial behaviour, in particular, underage drinking and alcohol and drug abuse
- There will be continual challenges in modern policing and Northern Constabulary is not complacent about an overall picture of low crime in the Force area
- The Force is committed to increased efficiency and putting resources into more effective and visible policing
- Northern Constabulary is proud of its professional and hard working image as a community based police force whose officers live and work within the communities they police

Public Engagement and Partnership Working

- Engaging effectively with the public and with communities is a priority
- Crime prevention, and tackling the underlying causes of crime, is everyone's responsibility
- Northern Constabulary values the support and help of the public and aims to establish and build on relationships with communities
- Northern Constabulary is actively working with partner agencies to protect people, prevent crime and maintain safe communities
- The Force is committed to working in partnership to increase road safety and achieve fewer road deaths and injuries

7. Structure and Corporate Vision:

Effective communication has a key role to play in assisting the Force to fulfil its policing policies, to communicate with the people of the Highlands and Islands, enabling an understanding of its priorities and their own responsibilities in relation to crime prevention and reporting.

Freedom of information legislation and the Human Rights Act place a greater than ever emphasis on the rights of people to open information about the police forces which serve them and this in turn focuses a greater public scrutiny on the work of public organisations.

The Corporate Communications Department sits within the Executive Unit in order to achieve Corporacy across the Force and to maximise the effectiveness of corporate communications and understanding of corporate vision. The department is led by the Head of Corporate Communications who advises the Executive on strategic media issues.

The department's role is to proactively co-ordinate corporate communications and messages in a planned and strategic way, to provide advice on media and marketing

matters to all officers and staff across the Force and to manage web and e-media communications.

Effective Website communications are essential to any organisation and Social networking and e-media cannot be ignored as technology is rapidly changing and it is imperative that Forces harness modern methods of communication to reach all audiences.

Effective internal communication is also fundamental to the performance and success of any large and complex organisation. Internal communication has a huge impact on external communication and how the Force is perceived. Every officer and member of staff has a role to play in promoting positive public relations and is an ambassador of the Force both on and off duty.

8. Objectives:

1. **Enabling:** To enable staff across Northern Constabulary to engage effectively, positively and corporately with the Media, the Public and Communities.
2. **Planning:** To increase the number of, and opportunity to read, positive stories, and reduce negative publicity. To develop forward plans and effective strategies for campaigns and openings and other key objectives, including identification of target audiences and methods of reaching the hard to reach.
3. **Informing:** To inform the public and increase public understanding of the Force's aims and objectives and to improve internal communication processes to support staff in understanding and promoting force messages
4. **Reassuring:** To ensure balanced messages and promote public confidence and reassurance
5. **Developing:** To develop positive and productive relationships between Northern Constabulary and the Media in order to harness the opportunity to publicise information
6. **Strengthening:** To strengthen the media arrangements within Emergency Planning, Civil Contingency Planning and the handling of major and significant media incidents
7. **Engaging:** Engaging with elected representatives and local opinion formers and communities to ensure visibility and responsive listening and to ensure that local views are well informed and policy is supported. Encouraging the public to report crime and to take responsibility for crime prevention in their communities.
8. **Evaluation and Monitoring:** To maximise the systems and processes available to evaluate the effectiveness of our communications

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