



Message from Commissioner: The reality of policing Devon and Cornwall during the summer holidays

This week the commissioner reveals the challenges facing police during the peak summer months.



Devon & Cornwall Police Officers on patrol

Every summer, the challenge is the same – when the sun comes out and the visitors arrive, Devon and Cornwall don't just get busier, they become some of the most popular destinations in the country. In fact, when it comes to domestic tourism, we beat everywhere – including London.

That's brilliant news for our economy, our communities, and all the people who love to holiday in the South West. But it's also a serious strain on our police force. Calls for service increases. Incidents of antisocial behaviour rise. Public spaces get crowded. And

all of this falls on the shoulders of the hardworking officers and staff of Devon & Cornwall Police.

So first and foremost, I want to say a heartfelt thank you to all of our emergency services. Many of them are working overtime, picking up extra shifts, and even coming in off their rest days to keep our communities safe. Some officers don't get to take leave at this time of year – and when they do, it's booked months in advance. Their commitment doesn't go unnoticed.

The summer plan for policing in Devon and Cornwall is extensive, coordinated, and based on what works. We've been doing this long enough to know that visibility and early intervention are key. So, this year, we're once again delivering hotspot policing across 15 towns and cities, backed by funding from the Home Office.

This means high-visibility patrols in areas where data shows crime and antisocial behaviour are more likely to occur. You'll see extra officers in places like Exeter, Plymouth, Torquay, Newquay, Barnstaple and St Austell – all of whom are working flat out to keep people safe. Street marshals employed by local authorities are also being deployed, part funded by my office, to support with engagement and early intervention, particularly in our busiest town centres.

We've got some specific local projects running too – Project Vigilant, which helps identify and stop predatory behaviour during the night-time economy, and Clear, Hold, Build in Plymouth's Stonehouse, tackling entrenched crime and rebuilding community confidence.

And I've ensured that Night Buses are back again this year. Funded by my office and working in partnership with local councils and Stagecoach, these services are running in Exeter, North Devon, Torbay, Newquay and Plymouth. They're a simple idea – pick people up from town centres in the early hours and get them home safely – but they make a huge difference.

The Night Bus reduces vulnerability, prevents crime, and helps people enjoy a night out without the risk of getting stranded or ending up in unsafe situations. It also relieves pressure on police and ambulance services during their busiest hours. For me, this is exactly the sort of partnership solution that we need more of.

Now let's be clear – the officers out there are doing their best. But do we have enough of them? You can never have too many officers, especially in a region as large and as busy as ours.

That said, I'm proud to say that thanks to local taxpayers and government support, Devon and Cornwall now has the highest number of officers we've ever had – 3,610 – and we're growing again. We've received funding to recruit more Police Community Support Officers through the new Neighbourhood Policing Grant, which will help reinforce our local teams and bolster that vital community presence.

Despite all of this, we still don't receive the funding we should. I've made the case to government more times than I can count: if you recognise that Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is the number one domestic tourist destination, then you should also recognise the summer surge in calls for service on our public services.

Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are some of the safest places to live and visit in the country, and while crime does spike a bit in summer, our region remains a great place to be. Whether you're heading to the beach, a festival, or just enjoying a sunny stroll through town, know this – our emergency services are out there, working hard, doing everything they can to keep you safe and well.

So please, give them a wave. Be patient if you see them dealing with something. And most of all, enjoy what this wonderful region has to offer.

Stay safe and have a wonderful summer.