

Annex a) Drone Unit – Additional Information

To provide further information in relation to the Alliance Drone Team.

Background

An update on the progress and activity of the Alliance Drone Team (ADT) during its first year of operation was shared with the Police and Crime Panel at the last meeting. In addition to the information provided, members were keen to understand more detail regarding the ADT's involvement in prosecutions.

In response, the ADT has reiterated that it is difficult to provide a direct correlation between drone use and successful prosecution as the deployment is only one part of a wider investigation. Therefore, it is not possible to say with total confidence that the inclusion of drone-captured evidence was the sole difference between success or otherwise. Nevertheless, the ADT has provided some case studies that illustrate the benefit of drone deployment in more detail.

Case Studies

1. Drug dealing at festival

During a music festival, a team of offenders were identified dealing large quantities of drugs. The Senior Investigating Officer requested that a related vehicle was located within the large car parking areas, spread out across many fields. Using the drone the ADT was able to quickly find the vehicle, saving many officer hours and assisting with the prompt investigation and arrests.

2. Firearms Deployment

During a firearms deployment, the ADT was able to provide line of sight to the rear of a property, which gave a vital source of information and intelligence for the firearms commander. As officers entered the address, the drone footage captured a man depositing an item out of the rear window. The footage allowed officers to link the man to the package, which was found to contain a golf ball-sized quantity of drugs.

3. Football Match

In March 2018 drone operators were deployed to a football match. Throughout the match, a drone was used to provide a live downlink to police commanders. The away fans were involved in significant disorder with police officers and the drone was able to give commanders an overview of what was happening as well as recording offences taking place and capturing vital evidence. This evidence is now being used to obtain football banning orders for a number of fans and it is important to note that these incidents weren't covered by CCTV so would otherwise have remained un-recorded.

4. Organised Crime Group

An extensive operation to arrest six members of an organised crime group (OCG) made use of the ADT. On the day of the operation, the drone was used to identify a key suspect and monitor his movements, facilitating his arrest. The drone recorded the arrest and the seizure of his vehicle.