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| Off Road Biking |
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| 2023  PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION  To provide an overview of the current position regarding off-road bikes and the joint work that Gwent Police has undertaken to date to deal with this issue.  INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND  Off-road bikes include a range of vehicles such as quad bikes and motorbikes, including scramblers and mini-motos.  For many years there has been a problem with off-road bikes being driven in a dangerous and anti-social manner and causing a nuisance. This problem is not unique to the Gwent Police area. However, there have been incidents of off-road bikes being driven in parks, on pavements and other public spaces, resulting in injuries, damage to the parks, fields, green spaces, common land and private property; the matter is therefore of concern to communities across Gwent Police area.  Between May 2022 and April 2023, the below is a breakdown of incidents of off-road bikes reported to Gwent Police. During this period 95 off-road bikes have been seized by GWP.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Local authority area** | **Number of incidents involving off-road bikes** | | **Caerphilly** | 366 | | **Torfaen** | 242 | | **Blaenau Gwent** | 199 |   It is illegal to drive or ride a mechanically propelled vehicle without lawful authority on common land, moorland or land not forming part of a road, or on any road which is a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway. [[1]](#footnote-1)  The West LPA has seen an increase in organised groups advertising off-road bike tours of the Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent open green areas.  *Operation Harley* is Gwent Police designated off-road force operation, with Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) and Roads’ Policing Operational Support (RPSO) conducting multi agency operations to target offenders, however ad hoc NPT operations have produced greater results.  A joint, collaborative project between Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities, along with Gwent Police (and OPCC) was launched on 1 November 2023.    This project established a funded, seconded post to address the identified issues across the three key local authorities.  This joint project utilises funding from the Shared Prosperity Funds (SPF) and Gwent Police, and funds 60% of a PC and 60% of a CSO for seventeen months from the start date. These resources have been identified and ready to start.  The agreed purpose of the role is below:  Primary Purpose of Gwent Police Officers:   * Coordinate monthly multi-agency meetings and establish better ways of joint working using key TCBC, Gwent Police and commoner-developed plans. * Support the creation of a new Gwent Illegal Off Roading partnership. * Support the development of a Gwent-focussed illegal off roading guidance publication to assist and empower both communities and professionals (including awareness of how to report incidents effectively for members of the community in and around hotspots) * Ensure all partners and KINs are kept updated (MPs, Cllrs, Local Authority, MoP) and utilised joint Corp comms to publicise actions and results of good work. * Support existing Heritage Watch schemes. * Deploy partnership signage in illegal off roading hotspots. * Work with local authority corporate comms to develop social media partnership strategy about the consequences of off roading. * Support the development of a project action plan to include exit strategy and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan to track and assess the results of the interventions throughout the life of a project: surveys before, during and after project interventions, number of seizures… * Review all reports and intelligence to identify enforcement opportunities and take suitable action in line with agreed tactics. * Assist key partners in their work in identifying, mapping, and monitoring vulnerable heritage / natural assets. Identify key hot spot areas – obtain photographs of areas and damage, access routes, then liaison with local authorities for multi-agency problem-solving long-term solutions.   Agreed Additional Purposes as Illegal Off-roading Specialists for the Locality:   * Educational piece of work – create a flow chart to share with all front-line officers providing guidance on how to effectively deal with off road bike offences, ensuring correct use of the powers. * Arrange training on powers and tactics for dealing with off-road bikes. * The Beat – create an Op Harley page on the Beat with guidance, local good work, monthly figures, latest national news etc * Corporate comms Op Harley strategy – ensure consistent messaging from the force. Including off-roading consequences video of footage of a seized off road bike, recovery and crushed. * Support Op Taurus – cross border multi agency operations. * Bench marking – ensure consistent reflection on what other forces are nationally to tackle issue and best practice. * Equipment – ensure constant review of resources and equipment required to tackle the issue.   Project Outcomes   * Sustained reduction in illegal off roading across the defined locality * Improved communication and joint working with stronger, more effective partnerships and strategic future planning * More empowered communities * Formation of Gwent Illegal off Roading Partnership * Reduced number of calls received for off-road bikes off road, and off-road bikes on roads. * All corporate comms having greater control, more proactive rather than reactive to off-road incidents. * Healthier upland ecosystems * Safeguarding our carbon stores to mitigate against climate change and protect against further carbon emissions. * Reduced levels of general landscape crime * Improved ability to demonstrate and share best practice. * Changed perceptions of the region * Greater collaboration between partners and more land use stakeholders engaged.   In addition to the above there is £20k capital available for the project from the local authorities. This has gone through Service Improvement Board (SIB) and approved. The funds will be used to purchase the following:   * Drone – approx. £15k * Pilot training and licence – approx. £2k * Camera and suitable lenses – approx. £1.5K   These will remain assets of Gwent Police. In addition the use of a Police marked 4x4 Land Rover for the project. Officers are receiving familiarisation training and specific off-road driver training. Further enquiries are underway to review additional funding opportunities.  FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS  All agreed. Potential further funding from Local Authorities which is ongoing.  PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS  All above. All agreed.  LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS  Joint Legal Services is in the final stages of completing the agreement between GWP and Torfaen County Borough Council (as the lead local authority) for the funded partnership project.  EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS  This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Joint Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.  In preparing this report, consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.  RISK  Force risk assessment for operational policing.  PUBLIC INTEREST  In producing this report, has consideration been given to ‘public confidence’?  It is reported by local MP’s that the public confidence in the police ability to tackle off road bikes is reducing. The project will address this.  Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain?  There will be a formal launch of the project in the coming weeks.  If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons:  There is no reason as to why this report should be exempt from the public domain however as provided above there will be a formal public launch.  REPORT AUTHOR  CI Paul Biggs, on behalf of C/Supt Carl Williams.  LEAD CHIEF OFFICER  A/DCC Mark Hobrough  ANNEXES  None.  GOVERNANCE BOARD AND CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL  I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers’ meeting.  Meeting chaired by:  CC Pam Kelly  Meeting date:  14.11.2023  Signature: Signature on white background Date: 14.11.2023 | | |
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1. There are various legal provisions that could apply when motorised bikes are being ridden off-road, in addition, the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 includes powers the police, councils and other local agencies can use to tackle anti-social behaviour involving off-road bikes.

   COLLABORATION [↑](#footnote-ref-1)