



HEADQUARTERS
One Lochside
1 Lochside Avenue
Edinburgh
EH12 9DJ

Teresa Medhurst
Chief Executive

1 July 2025

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Convenor, Criminal Justice Committee
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

EMAIL: justice.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Ms Nicoll

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE OFFICIAL REPORT- SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE - FOLLOW UP REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Thank you for your recent email following up on Suzy Calder and Stephen Coyle's appearance at the Criminal Justice Committee on 28 May. During the evidence session, they both agreed to provide the Committee with additional information, specifically:

- to provide further detail regarding the resource that would be required to tackle the issue of substances entering prisons, particularly the use of drones.
- to provide detail to the committee on the breakdown of ambulance callouts to HMP Kilmarnock following a 231% increase between 2023 and 2024.

I will address these points in turn to ensure as comprehensive a response as possible.

Illicit articles entering our prisons – Current technical and tactical mitigations

SPS deploy several technical and tactical measures to help prevent the introduction of substances into our establishments, including but not limited to X-Ray Body Scanners, walkthrough metal detectors and X-Ray machines. Additionally, SPS also use a National Tactical Search Unit who are specifically trained in searching people, articles and areas either in person or by drug detection dogs across the prison estate.

SPS has previously trialled drone detection technology at an annual cost of around £50,000 per establishment, however, due to technological advances this pilot is no

longer deemed viable. Further work is however ongoing to identify a suitable detection system to prevent illicit substances coming into Scottish prisons.

As the Committee will have seen in their recent visit to HMP Edinburgh. SPS is currently trialling window grilles at both HMP Edinburgh and Perth to assist in the prevention of Drones from delivering illicit substances.

Finally, all establishments with the exception of HMPs Dumfries, Inverness, Castle Huntly and HMP Stirling have 2 Rapiscan itemiser machines at a cost of approx. £30,000 per machine. These machines specifically assist in detecting substances which may have been concealed in items of mail and personal property and are in use in every prison in Scotland.

Additional Funding Resource Requirements to Enhance Current Mitigations

As an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government, SPS is required to comply with the guidance set out in the Scottish Public Finance Manual. As Chief Executive, I am also the Accountable Officer (AO) for the agency, with responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports achievement of our policies, aims and objectives set by Scottish Ministers. I fully understand this fiduciary role I hold and whilst I must ensure value for money for the Scottish Government and the taxpayers, I must also balance organisational goals and the safety of those who live and work in our prisons.

It is critical that I strike a balance between safety and strategy, ensuring that our organisation remains within its allocated budget as far as reasonably practicable. Given the population pressure and rising costs, I fully recognise that this is becoming increasingly difficult and requires constant reassessment to ensure we are meeting the aforementioned needs.

SPS have now given full consideration to the question asked by the committee, and due to the considerable number of variables attached to the question we are unable to confidently answer it with any degree of certainty.

However, in order to support the committee's enquiries, SPS has compiled a list of indicative resources required to ensure all establishments have the same hardware or infrastructure **SEE ANNEX A**. This list is not exhaustive and does not take into account current assessed risk and needs or staffing requirements. Furthermore, any financial figures provided are considered estimates due to the fact that full and final financial market scoping has not been completed.

Ambulance Incident Reports

During the recent Criminal Justice Committee session SPS also committed to provide "detail on the breakdown of the number of ambulance callouts to HMP Kilmarnock following a 231% increase in 2023 and 2024". However, we believe that the data referenced during the session is most likely to have come from the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS).

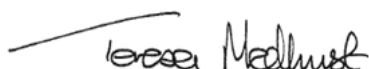
The following aims to provide the Committee with context relating to how SPS record incidents when an ambulance is required to attend the establishment.

In the event that an ambulance is required to attend an establishment, SPS will complete an incident report. These reports are sent to the Public Protection Unit (PPU) and recorded. For clarity the fundamental components of an incident report capture the fact that an ambulance was required, not necessarily the suspected ailment of the person and/or any other specific health data. Any information relating to an individual's personal health is recorded and retained by NHS Scotland.

SPS also record information relating to ambulances entering and leaving the establishment either by written movement logs or via the Prisoner Records system (PR2). This data however would not support interrogation as per the committee's request.

I trust that you find this information helpful and hope the further establishment visits planned can also provide further context to the questions raised.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teresa Medhurst', with a long horizontal stroke above it.

TERESA MEDHURST
Chief Executive

Annex A

Resource Requirement to ensure all establishments are operating with the same resource: assessed as at 25 June 2025									
	X Ray Body Scanner		Window Grille Units		Drone Detection Technology			Rapiscan Itemiser	
	No of units Required	Cost per unit	No of units Required	Cost per unit	No of units Required	Cost per unit		No of units Required	Cost
						Capital	Annual thereafter		
	4	£100,000	5470	£1100	13	£1,300,000	£650,000	4	£120,000
Total Cost		£400,000		£6,017,000		£1,300,000	£650,000	4	£120,000
Total Capital Cost			£7,837,000						
Total Annual Running Cost			£650,000						