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UK's first police drone takes to the skies

Police in Merseyside are taking the fight against crime to new heights, with the launch of the UK's first police drone.

The drone will take to Merseyside's skies in June and will support the Force's ongoing fight against crime and anti-social behaviour. The investment is part of Merseyside's Total Policing approach, with a focus on using technology to tackle criminals.

The drone - which is being trialled by the Force - uses the same type of camera facilities as the Force's helicopter and high visibility CCTV vans on the roads. Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne explains how unmanned technology provides a new, cost effective way of capturing vital evidence on camera and putting more officers on the beat. The trial is being supported by the Home Office Crime and Drug Directorate.

Support the Anti-Social Behaviour taskforce

"We're always looking at ways of putting more officers on the streets, and maximising technology is a powerful way of achieving this. Our drone will be used primarily to support our anti-social behaviour taskforce AXIS, in gathering all important evidence to put offenders before the courts.

"Other uses may include monitoring public disorder, crowd control during large scale events, and use during traffic congestion. We're also looking at its potential during firearm operations. For us, this is a cost-effective way of helping to catch criminals and supports similar technology we're already using in our vans and helicopter."

The Force introduced high visibility CCTV vans in 2001 as a deterrent to crime. The Force's helicopter is also equipped with evidence gathering equipment, including the new spotterscope system, which enables officers to gather evidence from the skies.

'Reduce crime through the use of new technology'

The Force's first drone is one metre in span and weighs less than a kilogram. It will be operational with the Force's AXIS team some time in June, and more drones could also be on the horizon in the future. ACC Byrne added: "We have spent the last six months working closely with the manufacturer MWPowert to test its capability and safety. We're reassured that it meets all our expectations and are hoping to introduce more drones in the future."

Deputy Director of the Police, Crime and Standards Directorate, Stephen Cahill, said: "We are pleased to support Merseyside Police in their efforts to reduce crime through the use of new technology. This trial is the first of its kind in the country and we're excited about its potential."

date added: **21 May 2007**updated: **n/a**

See the drone in action and watch interviews with Microdrone Spokesperson Alistair Fox and Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne.

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