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PRESS RELEASE

Issued at 3.42pm on Monday 7 June

Update following speculation regarding possible police sightings of Derrick Bird on the day of the fatal shootings in West Cumbria

Cumbria Constabulary can confirm that three unarmed police constables had sight of him in Whitehaven but at no point did they have an opportunity to end the killings sooner.

At about 10:33am a Neighbourhood Policing officer based at Whitehaven Police Station in Scotch Street heard shots fired and ran out of the station to assist. Upon witnessing a grey taxi with a shotgun pointing out of the front passenger's window he responded immediately by alerting the communications centre and getting into the nearest vehicle, driven by a Whitehaven man, to follow it and provide updates on Bird's location.

He travelled from Duke Street down Scotch Street and Lowther Street before turning right onto Coach Road where Bird was seen to slow down as he passed a taxi travelling in the opposite direction. As the two cars passed each other, the officer saw him shoot the driver of the other taxi. The officer immediately went to the assistance of the injured man by giving immediate first aid, treating serious injuries and ensuring all of their safety by moving him and his female passenger, who had also been shot, out of Bird's line of sight.

A double crewed unarmed police transit van that was following behind them from Flatts Walk overtook to take up a position behind Bird's taxi and continued to follow Bird to provide sightings to the police control room and the armed response vehicles who were on their way to the scene.

The officers in the Transit van were able to follow under instructions from the Force Incident Manager to provide information about Bird's location, which they did. Bird then appeared to pull into a driveway, turned and pointed the gun directly at the unarmed officers. They were forced to protect themselves after it became clear they could not reverse due to the traffic that had built up behind them. We believe he then drove off at speed. Despite having just witnessed a shooting and having a gun pointed at them, the officers attempted to follow him and despite asking passer-bys where he had driven, were unable to locate him again. They continued to stay in the area where further reports of Bird's location were given.

These officers were at the time unarmed and in a vehicle not suitable for a high speed pursuit. Whilst they had no opportunity to bring an end to Bird's rampage they provided valuable information regarding his whereabouts and likely route. They also provided immediate assistance to those shot and injured in the area.

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DCC Stuart Hyde said: "Our officers are expected to deal with difficult and challenging situations. This incident was unprecedented and exceptional circumstances were fast-moving and highly dangerous. Had any officer or member of staff had the clear opportunity to stop Bird I am confident they would have taken it."

end

Note to editors

If you would like to organise an interview regarding the above statement then call Police Press Office on 01768 217009 to organise. The Deputy Chief Constable Stuart Hyde will be available for interview at The Civic Hall in Whitehaven at around 4pm.

Attached is a map of the route Bird took when he was sighted by officers - which may assist in your coverage.