

Case study

# From patchy coverage to real-time command

Cumbria Police's connectivity shift



Image courtesy: Milton Haworth

# Vehicle-mounted Ericsson Cradlepoint routers transform how Cumbria polices the rural events and everyday crime

**Customer:**  
Cumbria police

**Industry:**  
Emergency services

**Use Case:**  
In-vehicle connectivity

## Success story highlights

**Challenge** — Cumbria Police serve one of the UK's largest and most geographically diverse force areas with limited officer numbers and patchy connectivity. During Appleby Horse Fair, thousands converge across 2,000 remote square miles, challenging commanders to target high-risk individuals, maintain situational awareness, and reliably share video, ANPR, and intelligence in real time.

**Solution** — Cumbria piloted and scaled Ericsson Cradlepoint vehicle routers to deliver always-on mobile connectivity. The solution enabled live video and

ANPR streaming, real-time intelligence sharing, and commander visibility from remote locations, using durable hardware that could be transferred across vehicles as the fleet expanded.

**Benefits** — In-vehicle router solutions enabled Cumbria to shift to targeted enforcement, reducing serious incidents during Appleby 2025 while increasing arrests and vehicle seizures. Shared live video and ANPR improved decision-making, daily efficiency, and officer morale. Transferable in-vehicle connectivity strengthened resilience, scaled across the fleet, and transformed operational command in remote environments.

## Background and challenges

Although Cumbria Police is the second-largest geographic force in the UK, it has one of the smallest numbers of police officers. In addition to this resource challenge, the region's unique mix of rural, urban, and industrial geography — including the Lake District — creates unpredictable connectivity for police who rely on mobile networks to connect to mission-critical systems for effective response.

Appleby Horse Fair, situated in Cumbria, is one of Europe's largest traveller gatherings, drawing people and vehicles from across the UK and the continent. The event (and the weeks surrounding it) presents Cumbria Constabulary with a complex policing challenge: how to keep communities safe and public confidence high while operating across roughly 2,000 square miles of remote, upland terrain where cellular and fixed infrastructure are frequently unreliable.

Cumbria needed a way to focus enforcement on a small number of high-risk individuals without stopping large numbers of lawful travellers; to give incident commanders live situational awareness across dispersed teams of up to 250 officers; and to reliably transmit vehicle-borne video, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) hits, and intelligence from anywhere so tactical decisions could be made quickly and proportionately.

## Solution

Using a pilot-then-scale approach, Cumbria paired Ericsson Cradlepoint routers with fleet and cloud evidence systems to ensure always-on connectivity for even its most remote officers. The rugged, vehicle-mounted routers provide a stable, high-bandwidth data platform that creates a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot in even the most remote locations.

“The technology has allowed us to move from broad, disruptive stops to surgical interventions that target the small number of people intent on causing harm. It's transformed the way we police Appleby and the surrounding area.”

Lee Skelton, Chief Inspector, Cumbria Police



Image courtesy: iStock

The deployment delivers:

- Live streams from vehicle and body-worn cameras to co-located command and remote supervisors.
- Real-time vehicle ANPR against bespoke watchlists, with audible alerts to officers and instant feedback to commanders.
- Secure transmission of images, intelligence and investigative data into the force's command systems and to partner forces.
- Durable, transferable hardware that can be moved to replacement vehicles when cars are damaged or written off, preserving capability.

Within months, the force had fitted an initial tranche of vehicles (around two dozen) and continued an aggressive expansion as new fleet vehicles came online.

"With Ericsson's vehicle-based platform, we can stream live video and ANPR hits from some of the most remote parts of Cumbria. That kind of connectivity simply wasn't possible before — it works, and it works where we need it most," said Lee Skelton, Chief Inspector, Cumbria Police.

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## Outcomes

### Targeted enforcement with reduced public harm

By using vehicle-borne ANPR and live video, Cumbria moved from broad, disruptive stops to surgical interventions focused on identified-risk individuals. During the 2025 Appleby operation, the force recorded 123 arrests and uplifted hundreds of offending vehicles. Crucially, the severity of offending decreased markedly: the most serious recorded offence against the person over the event was a single assault causing actual bodily harm (ABH), a notable improvement compared with previous years.

### Faster, confident decision-making

Commanders and duty sergeants now share the same live picture, enabling rapid assessment of incidents and more proportionate tactics — whether that means dispatching additional units, mobilising dogs and drones, or containing a situation remotely. The availability of live imagery and ANPR alerts has shortened decision cycles and improved the quality of tactical choices.

### Everyday policing gains and officer morale

Beyond major events, the platform is used daily across Cumbria. Officers report higher morale and immediate gratification from resolving checks on the spot and seeing tangible results. Supervisors across the county can now monitor operations from their laptops and dispense direction without relying on fixed assets.

"Morale was the highest I've seen at a major event in decades. When officers can see results in real time, and know their decisions are backed by live intelligence, it breeds confidence right across the operation," said Skelton.

### Scalability and resilience

The rugged Ericsson hardware is easily transferable between vehicles, ensuring capability can be maintained even when cars are damaged. Cumbria is normalizing the platform across its operational fleet with ambitions to expand coverage further.

"This has been a game changer," said Skelton. "We now have a stable vehicle-based platform that gives us a Wi-Fi hotspot in the middle of nowhere. It lets us identify the small number of people who cause most of the harm and intercept them, rather than disrupting everyone else. The technology works, it's trusted, and it's transformed how we command operations across Cumbria."



Image courtesy: iStock

## Partnership and next steps

Cumbria values the collaborative partnership with Ericsson: proven integration, reliable field performance, and responsive support. The force is now exploring further use cases — from rapid forensic backups at the scene to deeper laptop/API integration and controlled trials of advanced analytics — all aimed at extracting more value from the data the vehicles collect while preserving operational safeguards.

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Appleby Horse Fair images courtesy: Milton Haworth



Image courtesy: Lee Skelton (Left)



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