



Scottish Police Federation

PO Box 27163, GLASGOW, G3 9EZ

JCC Circular 36 of 2023

Ref: DK/LS

15 December 2023

Attachment: Letter to Cab Sec re Police Funding

Dear Colleague

I refer to the above, and attach herewith, a letter sent from the General Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice relative to police funding.

Yours sincerely

DAVID KENNEDY
General Secretary



SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION
Established by Act of Parliament

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Ref: DK/LS

By email: cabsecjha@gov.scot

12 December 2023

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Why the police need top funding priority.

We make no apology for seeking top billing in the funding decisions about to be taken by the Scottish Government. The first duty of the government is **to keep its citizens safe and the country secure**. We need to:

- be safe from the threat of terrorism
- reduce and prevent crime
- ensure the public feel safe in their communities and homes
- cut crime and the harm it causes, including cyber-crime and serious and organised crime

All of this is under threat due to a chronic shortage of funds.

We have been asset stripped and used as a cash cow. With recent announcements, we will have closed over 200 police offices and buildings since Police Scotland came into existence. We are policing with one arm tied behind our backs and our fingers crossed and that is not good enough for the people of Scotland.

Public safety and security are at risk, and we can only hope and pray that we do not witness a disaster.

Police Scotland was created in 2013 to save money and create efficiency in policing across our country. It has succeeded only in the former.

It is estimated that by 2023, £2 billion will have been cut from police budgets. Since 2013, when we had 17,496 police officers in Scotland, officer numbers have continually been

cut. We now work to an establishment figure of 16600, but subject to an ongoing recruitment freeze, this figure will fall to below 16000 by April 2024. With the threat of an extended recruitment freeze for the entire financial year of 2024-2025 who knows where this number may eventually fall to?

To positively compare police officer numbers in Scotland against colleagues in England and Wales is misleading and dangerous in as far as public confidence in policing is concerned. It takes no account of our geography and demography. It takes no account of our different legal system, and it takes no account of the use of PCSO's in England and Wales.

Budget cuts and a continued reduction in officer numbers will result in:

- Poorer public service and our communities being less safe
- Increased crime and reduced detections
- Increased stress and mental health problems for officers
- Increased family disruption and increased numbers of officers leaving

Police officer numbers are important. We all know that high levels of frontline officer numbers:

- Provides better quality service
- Provides reassurance, safety and security
- Deters criminals and prevents crime
- Provides prompt and appropriate responses
- Enables policing beyond basic functions
- Allows some contribution to mutual aid
- Allows participation in partnership working
- Provides a safety net for virtually all other public services
- Provides a safer working environment

All crime statistics should carry a health warning, but we know that only 30% of crime is ever reported to the police. We have changed counting protocols, we are phasing out crimes and the fewer police officers there are, the less crimes will be recorded. Police recorded warnings can skew crime figures. Subsuming crimes, where a number of crimes committed at the same time are counted as one, will reduce crime numbers. In 2022 serious violent crime rose by 5% to 69,117 and sexual crimes rose to 14,640. Rape has risen by 7% over the last 5 years.

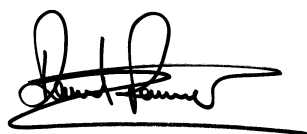
The fact is that the public are losing faith in and support for the police and this will continue until our ability to police with consent will be negatively impacted. This sorry situation is bound to get worse unless an immediate injection of funding is provided to the police. We note that the Chief Constable has sought £128m over flat cash and our view of this is that it is extremely conservative. Within that figure, £26.4m has been identified for capital but we know that to bring our estate up to an acceptable standard will take anything up to £800m. This is the result of years of underfunding and we must begin to repair the damage.

Whilst you will rightly say that operational decisions are for the Chief Constable, the decisions that are negatively impacting on our service right now are being driven by finance and finance alone. How can we ever hope to change the culture within our organisation or re-engage with our communities against a backdrop of training embargoes, hundreds of officers leaving the service and not being replaced due to recruitment freezes, and a continuous and relentless demand for our service? Without the correct investment, it is simply not possible.

The communities in all areas of Scotland are suffering negative consequences of police underfunding. The service we are providing is stretched and, in many cases, simply not good enough. Our members are suffering too, from overwork, stress, sickness, disruption to what should be time off and from feelings of low value and respect.

We all have a part to play in policing, but you are the only one who can provide us with the tools to allow us to do the job we are all so proud to carry out on behalf of, and for the communities of Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Kennedy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Kennedy
General Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Threadgold', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Threadgold
Chair