

The Thinning Blue Line

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i. Executive summary

Objective

This report builds on the work Reform Scotland has done in *Power to Protect* (2008) and *Striking the Balance* (2011), which examined the structure of policing in Scotland. We believe that just because the law is set centrally, it doesn't mean that we need to have a centralised police system and it is vital that there is greater room for flexibility. The report will argue that although the previous system was far from perfect; the change from nine forces (eight regional as well as the SCDEA) into one was more of a takeover by Strathclyde Police Force, as opposed to a merger. As well as considering the centralisation of the police, the report will also question the success of another Scottish Government policing policy of 1,000 extra police officers.

Findings

- The actual number of crimes being cleared-up has fallen from 198,985 in 2006/7 to 139,306 in 2013/14. This is despite the fact that:
 - Between 2006/7 and 2013/14, recorded crime in Scotland has fallen by 35 per cent.
 - The number of police officers in Scotland have increased from 16,234 in quarter one of 2007 to 17,295 in quarter one of 2015 – in line with the Scottish Government's commitment to 1,000 additional officers.
- As a result, the number of crimes cleared up per FTE police officer has fallen from 12 in 2006/7, to eight in 2013/14.
- The creation of a single police force removed local authorities' direct role in the funding and governance of the police. There are examples, such as the arming of the police or dealing with prostitution in saunas, which suggest local differences in policing practices have been restricted by the merger.

Policy Recommendations

Localised policing: Reform Scotland fundamentally disagrees with the idea of a single police force across Scotland as we don't believe that a single force allows for the necessary flexibility to deal with the differences that exist throughout Scotland. Although we have one set of laws that apply to all, there are different priorities and needs that need to be taken into account; we don't believe that there is the same ability to do that with only one force. We argued at the time that we did not think it was necessary to merge the police forces and certainly would disagree that Scotland had too many forces prior to the merger. Many European

countries have multi-layered policing systems, with a centralised police force for serious crime as well as local police forces.

Our preference would have been for a stronger role for the Scottish Crime & Drug Enforcement Agency so that there was a greater opportunity for shared services and joint working, as well as strengthening the ability to deal with cross-border threats. At the same time, we would have also liked a stronger, more locally accountable system, which we believe could have been achieved by matching police forces up to local authority areas – a system which could have been easily piloted in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. This policy would have helped deliver greater local accountability, and by maintaining the funding split between councils and central government, this would have allowed councils to choose to spend more, or less, on policing as their area required. Such a policy would also easily allow for different policing procedures, for example the use of firearms or dealing with prostitution, to be adopted. The local chief constable would have operational responsibility, though would be answerable to the local council.

However, we accept that wholesale police re-organisation on this scale is unlikely and that, with Police Scotland still relatively new, it would be better to find a way to re-inject localism into the existing structure. We believe that there are two ways, in particular, that this can be done – through the funding and governance structures.

Funding: As the old adage goes, “He who pays the piper calls the tune”, and if local authorities are to have any meaningful input into policing in Scotland they must contribute toward the cost of policing. If local authorities have no control over the purse strings then it will be difficult for councils to adopt differing policies towards policing, or even have a meaningful input into policy direction. As a result, there needs to be a change back to the old system where there is roughly a 50/50 split in funding policing between local authorities and the Scottish Government. However, for this to be effective within a single police structure there would need to be some divisional structural changes to reflect council boundaries so that divisions matched up to local authority areas. This would then mean that there was a division commander in charge of policing in each council area in Scotland. Each council would need to have a policing committee or individual responsible for policing who would liaise and work with the Division. This would allow for greater accountability to local communities as well as an increased actual input into local policing.

Governance: The Scottish Police Authority is basically a quango with members appointed by government and this blurs transparency and accountability. Rather than the government nominating all members, the membership should be made up of a split between local government and central government appointees to reflect the split in funding. To ensure that the need for diversity and flexibility could be accommodated by a single police force it would be necessary to have a representative from each local authority. This would of course lead to a very large police authority – depending on the number of local authorities. However, this representation is necessary to ensure the different needs are appreciated and represented on the board as well as delivering a clear line of accountability back to voters.

Review 1,000 additional police officers policy: While the fall in recorded crime in Scotland is to be welcomed, it is worrying that, over a period of falling crime and an increase in police officers, fewer crimes were actually being cleared-up. Unison, representing police staff, has suggested that this policy, combined with pressures to find savings, have led to Police Scotland getting rid of civilian staff and, as a result, police officers have had to fill those roles. If police officers have to spend more time in back offices, as opposed to being on patrol, it could help to explain this fall. We would urge the Scottish Government to review this commitment to see if it is actually delivering value for taxpayers' money. Given the drop in crimes cleared-up since the introduction of this policy, it is quite possible that changing it, or dropping it altogether, could actually lead to an increase in the number of police out on the beat. After all, it is not just the number of police officers that is important, but how they are deployed.

It is important to highlight that removing the pledge does not necessarily mean a reduction in police officers. If the pledge was removed, this would give greater operational freedom to the Chief Constable to use resources in the way he feels is most effective – this may be to maintain existing police numbers, but it may be to deploy some of his budget elsewhere. However, this would be an operational decision rather than a political one, and one for which the Chief Constable would be accountable.

...But beware the local authorities' issue: While some of the suggestions outlined in these policy recommendations can resurrect an element of localism within Police Scotland, there is one note of caution.

When Reform Scotland argued against the creation of a single police force and that police forces should match up with local authority boundaries, there was no

objection to this principle. Instead, it all focused on the fact that this would leave Scotland with 32 police authorities and that this was too many. There was a problem with accountability within the eight force structure, but there is a danger that the move to a single force was done because it was easier than having to examine local government.

Former Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill suggested in 2012 that it was “inevitable” there would be changes to the structure of local government in Scotland.¹

Whatever those changes, regardless if they bring about greater localism or less, it is vital that changes to local government are made prior to any changes to Police Scotland – the horse must be put before the cart.

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-20484775>, 25/11/12

1. Background

1.1 Nine into one

The previous structure of policing in Scotland was far from perfect. Two forces, Dumfries & Galloway and Fife, were governed by unitary police boards made up of councillors from only one council as they each covered only one local authority area. The remaining six forces; Central, Grampian, Lothian & Borders, Northern and Strathclyde each covered multiple local authority areas. As a result, their respective police boards comprised councillors from each of the local authorities the force covered. The police board would then be presided over by one of the councillors. In addition to the eight local police forces, Scotland also had the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA)

The eight force structure, along with the SCDEA, certainly had a confusing accountability structure and little, if any, direct accountability to the man or woman in the street. Operational matters, including police deployment, were rightly the responsibility of Chief Constables, who in turn were accountable to police boards. The police forces' income came in part from local authorities and the rest from the Scottish Government. However, the police boards, made up of councillors from the various council areas covered by the police force, were generally neither accountable to the electorate nor particularly transparent.

For example, an individual councillor would be the Chairman of a Police Board. However, for joint boards, that individual would only be accountable to the council area from which he or she came and certainly wouldn't have any accountability back to the electorate in areas outside their own council area.

The eight policing forces also differed greatly in terms of the area, population, number of police officers and the level and type of crime, as illustrated in Tables 1 to 5.

Table 1: The Scottish police forces pre-merger

Police Force	Population ²	Area, sq miles	Number of officers ³	Number of people per police officer	sq miles per police officer	Gross revenue expenditure £'000s 2010/11 ⁴	Crimes per 10,000 people ⁵ (2009/10)	Crime detection rate 2009/10 ⁶
Central Scotland Police	291,760	1,020	846	345	121	62,232	562	60
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	148,510	2,469	508	292	486	38,390	464	71
Fife Constabulary	363,460	531	1,082	336	49	80,525	581	55
Grampian Police	544,980	3,373	1,546	353	218	118,372	567	48
Lothian and Borders Police	939,020	2,500	2,990	314	84	222,853	692	43
Northern Constabulary	288,840	12,000	792	365	1,515	63,229	490	62
Strathclyde Police	2,217,880	5,371	8,382	265	64	561,939	725	47
Tayside Police	399,550	2,896	1,225	326	236	89,380	570	58
SCDEA			205			24,079		

Table 2: Non-sexual crimes of violence per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Non sexual crimes of violence per 100,000 people
Strathclyde Police	31
Lothian and Borders Police	19
Northern Constabulary	16
Grampian Police	14
Tayside Police	14
Central Scotland Police	11
Fife Constabulary	10
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	8

Table 3: Crimes of indecency per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Crimes of indecency per 100,000 people
Fife Constabulary	17
Grampian Police	17
Central Scotland Police	13
Lothian and Borders Police	13
Northern Constabulary	11
Strathclyde Police	11
Tayside Police	11
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	5

² Scottish Government, "A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland", February 2011

³ Scottish Government, "A consultation on the future of policing in Scotland", February 2011

⁴ Scottish Policing Board papers, "Sustainable Policing Project. Phase two report: Options for reform", March 2011. £82,988,000 was also spent on the Scottish Police Services Authority and £60,000,000 on Scottish Government/ other.

⁵ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10, 2010

⁶ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2009/10, 2010

Table 4: Crimes of dishonesty per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Crimes of dishonesty per 100,000 people
Lothian and Borders Police	360
Strathclyde Police	304
Grampian Police	294
Tayside Police	282
Fife Constabulary	261
Central Scotland Police	249
Northern Constabulary	187
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	176

Table 5: Fire raising, vandalism etc per 100,000, 2009/10.

Police Force	Fire-raising, vandalism etc per 100,000 people
Strathclyde Police	200
Lothian and Borders Police	189
Fife Constabulary	179
Central Scotland Police	163
Northern Constabulary	153
Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary	150
Tayside Police	143
Grampian Police	140

What is interesting to note from Table 1 is that there is no over-riding pattern. Strathclyde, which served the largest population, second largest geographical area and had the largest number of police officers per capita had the second lowest detection rate and the highest crime rate in 2009/10, while Dumfries & Galloway served the smallest population and had the lowest crime rate and best detection rate. However, Northern Constabulary had the second lowest crime rate and second highest detection rate in 2009/10, but the lowest number of police officers per capita.

However, these different results also reflect the different nature of the areas covered – they all had different circumstances and priorities and were not easily comparable. Tables 2 to 5, ranking the forces with regard to different categories of crimes, also indicate the different problems affecting the different areas. For example, while Fife Constabulary had the second lowest rate for non-sexual crimes of violence, it had the highest rate for crimes of indecency, and Grampian Police had the third highest rate for crimes of dishonesty, but the lowest rate for fire-raising and vandalism. The different nature of crimes in these different areas illustrate that different methods need to be adopted to combat the different problems.

The funding for police forces was split between local authorities and central government on a roughly 49/51 split.⁷

⁷ Scobie. G & Wakefield. S, "Police Funding", SPICe briefing, 24/10/13

Given the convoluted accountability system, it is unsurprising that the Scottish Government wanted to improve the situation. However, Reform Scotland would argue what it did was make the situation far worse, with opaque local accountability replaced with no local accountability at all.

The Police & Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 abolished the existing eight territorial police forces (as well as the eight fire brigades), their governing bodies and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. They were replaced with a new national single police force, Police Scotland, which had new governance and funding arrangements. The police force now receives all its funding from central government.

1.2 Police Scotland

Police Scotland was formally established on 1 April 2013 and is currently the second largest police force in the UK after the Metropolitan Police.

The former Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, Sir Stephen House, is the Chief Constable of the new force.

There are 14 local policing divisions, each of which is headed up by a Local Police Commander, as well as specialist divisions, such as Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism. Operations Support divisions support functions such as Road Policing and Air Support.⁸

Police Scotland's priorities are set out in the force's Annual Police Plan and are supposed to be aligned to the strategic priorities set by the Scottish Government.

It is the job of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) to hold the Chief Constable to account for policing in Scotland. The SPA's members are appointed by the Scottish Government.

As a result, the local accountability that used to exist within policing has been removed, as local authorities no longer contribute in terms of finance or governance.

⁸ <http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/>

It should be noted that although there are also 14 health board areas in Scotland, these areas are not the same as the 14 local divisions, which are listed below. There are different numbers of command areas within each division:

- Aberdeenshire & Moray
- Aberdeen City
- Argyll & west Dunbartonshire
- Ayrshire
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Edinburgh
- Fife
- Forth Valley
- Greater Glasgow
- Highland & Islands
- Lanarkshire
- Renfrewshire & Inverclyde
- Tayside
- The Lothians & Scottish Borders

1.3 Justification for centralisation

The Scottish Government published a business case for police reform in September 2011.⁹ The report argued that although the police were performing well in Scotland, with low levels of crime and high levels of public satisfaction “*In the face of unprecedented cuts to public sector budgets, the Scottish Government wishes to protect this level of performance. It is not possible to meet that challenge in the current structure and organisation of policing in Scotland.*”

The report considered three different re-structuring models, of which a single force was the Scottish Government’s preferred option. The report set out that a single force offered the greatest potential to generate efficiencies¹⁰:

- Total net present value of £1,364 million over 15 years and annual recurring cash savings estimated at £106 million from the end of the programme of change;
- requires up to £161 million of one-off transitional investment over the programme of change;

⁹ Scottish Government, ‘Police Reform Programme: Outline Business Case’, September 2011

¹⁰ Scottish Government, ‘Police Reform Programme: Outline Business Case’, September 2011

- would best deliver non-financial benefits in improvements to service delivery and policing outcomes with the removal of internal boundaries which would facilitate specialist resources being deployed flexibly across Scotland as required, and national capacity to tackle threats such as terrorism and serious organised crime where it is needed;
- The single service model presents the best opportunity to drive out duplication, ensure consistency, and rationalise existing systems and structures as far as possible. Efficiencies should be realised through economies of scale, with expertise, capability and budgets pooled at a national level then targeted to local need.

Table 6 illustrates how the Outline Business Case saw the efficiency savings being achieved in the first five years, while Table 7 sets out the costs in the same period. Table 8 sets out the projected long term financial benefits.¹¹

Table 6: Police Reform Outline Business Case projected efficiency savings in first five years of single force

£000	0	1	2	3	4
Officers	17,300	17,775	23,373	38,025	43,990
Staff	4,260	10,750	28,720	54,579	66,004
Vehicles	0	0	176	512	702
Supplies/ Equipment	0	0	9,085	18,075	23,403
Estate	0	0	0	2,650	5,300
ICT	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	1,000	2,000	2,000
Transfer/ Outsource	0	0	1,550	5,608	7,213
Cost avoidance	0	0	250	250	250
Income generation	0	0	1,750	1,750	1,750
Total	21,560	28,525	65,904	123,449	150,612
Cumulative total	21,560	50,085	115,989	239,438	390,050

¹¹ Scottish Government, 'Police Reform Programme: Outline Business Case', September 2011

Table 7: Police Reform Outline Business Case projected costs in first five years of single force

£000	0	1	2	3	4
Programme/ Project	3,436	9,335	8,209	2,009	0
Shadow Governance	0	1,720	0	0	0
ICT	0	2,000	5,000	5,000	0
Training	0	0	8,234	8,234	0
Relocation/ Excess travel	0	0	1,137	539	539
Other costs	0	0	0	3,256	3,256
Contingency/ Optimism Bias	344	3,845	10,787	9,851	286
Total	3,780	16,900	33,367	28,889	4,081
Cumulative total	3,780	20,679	54,046	82,935	87,016

Table 8: Cumulative financial benefits of moving to a single force

£000	5 year	10 year	15 year
Financial benefit	350,437	1,001,785	1,653,134

In November 2013, Audit Scotland published a report looking at the planning and implementation of the police reform. The report commented that it did not think it was clear how the stated savings would be achieved.¹² It noted:

- The creation of a single police service is one of the biggest reforms in the Scottish public sector since devolution. The new arrangements became operational on 1 April 2013. Much was achieved during the transition period. Police Scotland reports show front-line services have been maintained and progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of reform.
- Planning the move to a single police service was hampered by poor baseline information, a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, and difficult relationships between the Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland. There have been significant changes to governance arrangements and some important strategies and plans are still under development.

¹² Audit Scotland, 'Police Reform: Progress Update 2013', November 2013

- The costs and savings estimates for reform are based on the Outline Business Case prepared by the Scottish Government in September 2011. These estimates were not updated nor a full business case prepared. The SPA and Police Scotland have still to finalise and agree a financial strategy showing how savings will be achieved beyond 2013/14.
- The SPA and Police Scotland face continuing challenges in delivering the savings required. Their limited flexibility in managing police officer and staff numbers and delays in decision-making contribute to this.

The report noted that many savings are expected to come from reducing police staff costs, which comprise 20 per cent of the SPA's budget. In 2013/14, anticipated savings from voluntary redundancy and early retirement schemes totalled £13.6 million with £20.7 million from other staff savings such as not replacing people who leave. In addition, £21.1 million is expected to come through reduced spending in other areas such as property and supplies.

The Audit Scotland report goes on to note that the SPA and Police Scotland estimate that around 800 police staff will need to leave through voluntary redundancy and early retirement schemes for the required savings to be realised in 2013/14. The exact figure will depend on savings generated by other means such as not filling posts when people leave under normal circumstances. The process of voluntary redundancy and early retirement schemes is ongoing. As at September 2013, 314 of 542 applications (58 per cent) for voluntary redundancy or early retirement had been approved by the SPA and accepted by staff.

Following Audit Scotland's work, Holyrood's Public Audit committee published a report into the police reform process in 2014. A minority report, published by opposition members of the committee, was also published after they accused SNP members of trying to suppress criticism of the police merger.¹³

The committee report was concerned that lack of data on baseline costs and non-operational data hampered the production of a financial strategy, but acknowledged that the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland were on track to deliver savings targeted for 2013/14.¹⁴

¹³ Marshall, C, 'SNP "tried to suppress report on Police Scotland"', Scotsman, 14 May 2014

¹⁴ Scottish Parliament, Public Audit Committee report on police reform, 2014

1.4 Local Differences

At the time the legislation was being debated, Reform Scotland questioned how a single police force without local accountability would be able to operate different policing practices in different parts of the country to take account of different needs and priorities. Some of our concerns have come to light as the following examples have highlighted the lack of room for local variation:

Edinburgh sauna licensing:

Prior to the police merger, different policies were pursued with regard to policing prostitution across Scotland. There was, arguably, a “pragmatic” tolerated approach in Edinburgh which contrasted to a more zero tolerance approach in Glasgow. In Scotland, selling sex is legal between two consenting adults - as long as it does not involve selling sex from the street or in a brothel. However, buying sex from street prostitutes, or kerb-crawling, is illegal. In Edinburgh, the city council licenses saunas which are commonly thought to allow prostitution on their premises; this differentiates Edinburgh from the rest of the country.

In December 2012, prior to the police merger George Lewis from Scotpep, a charity which advocates on behalf of sex workers, commented to the BBC: *"at the moment the largest police force in Scotland has a zero tolerance approach to sex work, and if it's that view that's allowed to prevail we'd be very, very worried about it being extended to the rest of Scotland. Particularly when we feel that the police force here in Lothian and Borders has a pragmatic and progressive approach that has given us lots of benefits and advantages."*¹⁵

Arguably these fears came to pass with the merger. In the Scotsman on 30 May 2014¹⁶, Steve Allen, the former deputy chief constable of Lothian and Borders Police, commented on the impact that the police merger had had, saying that it had:

"brought together fundamentally different leadership styles that created misunderstandings.

"They felt that some of their basic principles and beliefs about policing were being challenged. Others believed that they were not performing in a way that was expected of them and it spilled out into a wider political arena.

"The sauna raids in Edinburgh challenged a way of policing that had existed for a decade or more in terms of style and methods. The new policy pursued by Police

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-20559838>

¹⁶ <http://www.scotsman.com/news/scotland/top-stories/edinburgh-sauna-raids-show-police-culture-clash-1-3427402>

Scotland challenged the approach that police had taken there which was about tolerance and harm minimisation.

“It continues to be a lively debate within the City of Edinburgh Council. It was an illustration very early on that you can’t assume that because you’re in the police that the approach is going to be the same across the country.”

Reform Scotland is not commenting on whether one policing strategy is right or wrong, but differences in approach are vital because Scotland is a diverse country and what works in one area, won’t necessarily work elsewhere and this example indicates that there is now little room for local flexibility.

Arming of the police

In early 2014, it was reported in the media that police officers were seen carrying handguns while carrying out regular duties. Then, in the summer, customers in McDonalds in Inverness reportedly expressed alarm at seeing armed officers in the restaurant.¹⁷ What was perceived as an increased use of armed police officers in Scotland eventually led to the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice making a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 5 August 2014. The following is an extract of that statement:

“Scotland is rightly proud that its police officers conduct their daily business unarmed. That has always been the case, and I make it clear to the Parliament that that is how we intend it to remain. Armed officers have for a considerable time provided support for police colleagues and security for citizens. However, the public should be assured that the number of officers who are authorised to carry weapons is low and limited. Only 275 of the 17,318 officers who are employed by Police Scotland are deployed on firearms duties—that is less than 1.6 per cent of our police force. It should also be made clear that those officers operate on a shift system and are subject to extraction and indeed holiday entitlement, so only a fraction of that already low number will be on duty at any one time.

“Gun crime in Scotland is rare, but in Police Scotland’s first year, specialist firearms units attended 1,300 incidents across the whole of the country, including more than 100 in the Highlands. It is not just gun crime and firearms incidents that they deal with, as they are also called out to deal with incidents where there is a significant threat. Those can involve knives, samurai swords, machetes or even broken bottles. The presence of those officers in such situations is necessary for the

¹⁷ <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/kenny-macaskill-under-fire-over-armed-police-1-3467725>

safety of colleagues and the public alike. It is therefore essential that the chief constable has the operational flexibility that he needs to properly protect the public and ensure the safety of his officers.

“The decision on the deployment of armed officers and the granting of standing firearms authority within a police force that is recognised as one that goes about its day-to-day business unarmed is therefore an operational matter for the chief constable. That has always been the case. That is how it was before the inception of Police Scotland, and that is how it remains. The current standing firearms authority was given by the chief constable after a range of factors were assessed, including evidence and intelligence. The authority is not new. Three of the former constabularies—Strathclyde Police, Tayside Police and Northern Constabulary—had endorsed that position prior to the inception of the service, and the approach is taken in 42 of the 43 services in England and Wales.”

While the statement suggests that only a small number of officers are armed at any one time, what is more alarming is the lack of democratic accountability for the change in practice. Kenny MacAskill said that the armed police policy applied to three of the former police force areas. That means that in areas that were covered by the other five police forces there had been a change of policy without any local input and again adds to the suggestion that rather than taking local needs and circumstances into account, the merged force is simply pushing policies that were pursued in Strathclyde onto the rest of the country.

In October 2014, Police Scotland announced a change in the policy regarding the arming of the police so that now specialist armed police officers will only be deployed to firearms incidents or where there is a threat to life.

Housebreaking unit – Edinburgh

Prior to the police force merger, Lothian & Borders Police operated a housebreaking unit in Edinburgh. The unit comprised specialist teams of officers to tackle burglaries. However, the unit was scrapped when Police Scotland took over policing in Edinburgh. As a result, detection rates, which had previously been about 40 per cent, fell to just 17 per cent.¹⁸ In the year to April 2014, there were 4,101 housebreakings, an increase of 38.7 per cent on the previous year.¹⁹

The housebreaking unit has now been reinstated and resulted in a reduction in the level of the crime and an improvement in its detection. Local politicians claimed

¹⁸ Evening News, ‘Housebreaking detection rates soar in Edinburgh’, 6 November 2014

¹⁹ Evening News, ‘Housebreakings up 40% under Police Scotland’, 3 July 2014

that the scrapping of the housebreaking unit was due to a lack of local focus in the new centralised police body.

Mike Crockart, then MP for Edinburgh West, commented “*These figures are further proof of the loss of local focus which happened after the formation of Police Scotland.*”²⁰

While Conservative councillor Cameron Rose said “*There was a decision taken at the beginning of Police Scotland to move from inquisitive crime to crimes of violence on the person, and whilst that may have justification, they simply haven’t responded quickly enough to the failure in relation to housebreaking. That slowness in response appears to have been a reluctance to challenge the diktat of the Chief Constable. Local policing should have been able to respond to that, and didn’t, and I suspect that it was because of Sir Stephen House’s leadership style.*”²¹

²⁰ Evening News, ‘Housebreakings up 40% under Police Scotland’, 3 July 2014

²¹ Evening News, ‘Housebreakings up 40% under Police Scotland’, 3 July 2014

2. Statistics

2.1 Police numbers:

Ahead of the 2007 Scottish election, the SNP pledged in government that they would be “Putting more police onto local streets with a more visible police presence”²². The Scottish Conservatives pledged in their manifesto that they would “hire 1,500 more police officers”²³.

As the SNP did not win a majority at the 2007 election, the party relied on others to help pass Scottish Government legislation, including its budgets, and agreement was reached in 2007 over a commitment for the Scottish Government to deliver an additional 1,000 police officers.²⁴ Preserving the additional 1,000 police officers was a commitment in the SNP’s 2011 manifesto “We will continue to drive down crime by keeping the 1,000 extra police in our communities”.

Table 9 illustrates the number of police officers in Scotland since 2007.

Table 9 - Total number of Police Officers (Full-time Equivalent) in Scotland, 2007-15²⁵

Year	Quarter	Scotland
2007	Q1	16,234
	Q2	16,265
	Q3	16,306
	Q4	16,267
2008	Q1	16,222
	Q2	16,339
	Q3	16,526
	Q4	16,675
2009	Q1	17,048
	Q2	17,278
	Q3	17,217
	Q4	17,273
2010	Q1	17,409
	Q2	17,424
	Q3	17,371
	Q4	17,217
2011	Q1	17,263
	Q2	17,339
	Q3	17,265
	Q4	17,343
2012	Q1	17,436
	Q2	17,373

²² SNP manifesto 2007 - <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ass07/man/scot/snp.pdf>

²³ Scottish Conservative manifesto 2007 - http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ass07/man/scot/cons_07_manifesto.pdf

²⁴ Scottish Conservative manifesto 2011 <http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Scottish-Parliament-2011.pdf>

²⁵ Scottish Government, ‘Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics Scotland’, March 2015

	Q3	17,454
	Q4	17,436
2013	Q1	17,496
	Q2	17,324
	Q3	17,313
	Q4	17,258
2014	Q1	17,244
	Q2	17,318
	Q3	17,267
	Q4	17,254
2015	Q1	17,295

In addition to police officers, there are also Special Constables, who are volunteer officers. These volunteers are part-time and work alongside regular police.²⁶ Using the Scottish Policing Performance Framework annual reports, Table 10 illustrates the number of special constables in Scotland between 2007/8 and 2012/13.

Table 10: The number of Special Constables in Scotland between 2007/8 and 2012/13²⁷

Year	Number of Special constables in Scotland
2007/8	1,408
2008/9	1,575
2009/10	1,649
2010/11	1,653
2011/12	1,456
2012/13	1,411

2.2 Recorded crime

In Scotland, recorded crime has been falling each year since 2006/7. It is a remarkable achievement that between 2006/7 and 2013/14, recorded crime fell by 35 per cent.²⁸ Such statistics would suggest that crime prevention policies in Scotland are working well and are to be welcomed. Clear-up rates have also risen, from 47 per cent to 52 per cent. However, there is a slightly worrying trend that appears when the two sets of statistics are combined – fewer crimes are actually

²⁶ <http://www.scotland.police.uk/recruitment/special-constables/special-constable-faqs/>

²⁷ Scottish Government, 'Scottish Policing Performance Framework Annual Report 2010/11', October 2011; 'Scottish Policing Performance Framework Annual Report 2012/13', November 2013

²⁸ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2013/14, November 2014

being solved. Arguably, if there are fewer crimes being committed, this should free up police time to solve more of the crimes that are still being committed. But this has not happened. As crime is falling at a faster rate than the increase in the clear-up rate, as is illustrated in chart 1 and Table 11 below, compared with 2006/7, nearly 60,000 fewer crimes-a-year are being cleared-up.

The clear-up rate on its own cannot, and should not, be used as a measure of success. For example, if in an area there were 100 crimes in year one, with a clear-up rate of 40% and in year two there were 70 crimes, with a clear-up rate of 50%, the actual crimes solved would fall from 40 crimes to 35 crimes. So while the police in this area could be credited with helping reduce crime, you could certainly ask why it is that they are failing to solve as many crimes, especially when fewer are being committed; and this is what has happened across Scotland.

Chart 1: Recorded crime and crimes cleared-up in Scotland, 2004/5 to 2013/14

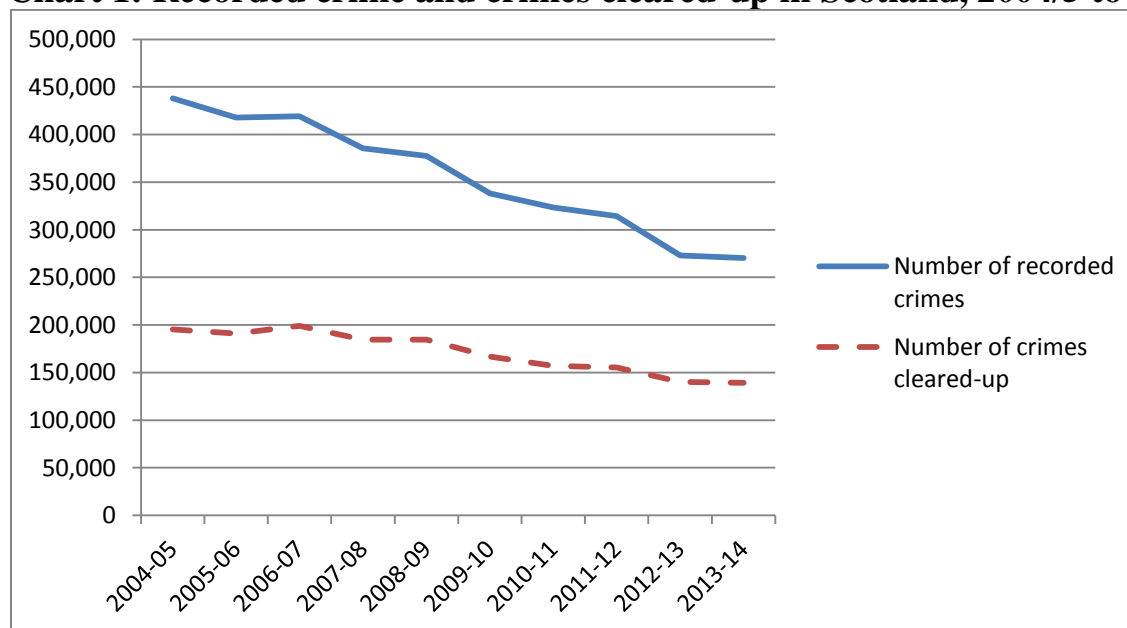


Table 11: Actual number of crimes cleared up in Scotland, 2004/5 to 2013/14

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Total recorded crimes	438,123	417,785	419,257	385,509	377,433	338,124	323,247	314,188	273,053	270,397
Clear up rate	45	46	47	48	49	49	49	49	51	52
Total crimes cleared-up	195,225	190,918	198,985	184,631	184,719	166,680	156,943	155,264	140,083	139,306

This trend is true for all crime categories, with the exception of sexual crimes, where the actual number of crimes cleared-up has increased, as illustrated in Table 13 below. Table 12 shows the actual number of crimes committed in each category, while Table 14 highlights the difference between 2006/7 and 2013/14.

Table 12: Recorded crime broken down by crime category, 2004/5 to 2013/14

Crime group	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Total Crimes	438,123	417,785	419,257	385,509	377,433	338,124	323,247	314,188	273,053	270,397
Non-sexual crimes of violence	14,728	13,726	14,099	12,874	12,612	11,228	11,438	9,533	7,530	6,785
Homicide etc. ¹ (incl. causing death by driving)	165	121	159	142	134	106	122	121	91	106
Attempted murder & serious assault ²	7,603	7,030	7,345	6,711	6,472	5,621	5,493	4,693	3,643	3,268
Robbery	3,736	3,553	3,578	3,064	2,963	2,496	2,557	2,244	1,832	1,499
Other violence	3,224	3,022	3,017	2,957	3,043	3,005	3,266	2,475	1,964	1,912
Sexual crimes³	7,325	6,558	6,726	6,552	6,331	6,527	6,696	7,361	7,693	8,604
Rape & attempted rape	1,109	1,161	1,123	1,053	963	996	1,131	1,274	1,462	1,808
Sexual assault	3,470	3,392	3,452	3,502	3,297	3,412	3,220	2,908	3,008	3,405
Crimes associated with prostitution	1,458	730	779	682	765	661	576	567	534	490
Other sexual crimes	1,288	1,275	1,372	1,315	1,306	1,458	1,769	2,612	2,689	2,901
Crimes of dishonesty	210,365	187,798	183,760	166,718	167,812	153,256	155,870	154,337	135,899	137,324
Housebreaking ⁴	34,959	31,319	30,580	25,443	25,496	23,774	25,017	24,222	21,515	22,272
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	7,849	8,263	7,422	6,378	6,952	5,074	4,059	3,529	3,239	3,218
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	20,403	16,453	16,060	15,217	13,649	10,173	9,495	8,988	6,159	6,189
Theft of a motor vehicle	15,633	14,041	15,000	12,105	11,551	9,304	8,716	7,060	5,731	5,976
Shoplifting	28,534	28,247	28,750	29,186	32,048	30,332	29,660	29,758	26,449	27,693
Other theft	77,586	72,128	70,241	64,645	64,384	61,008	64,680	66,681	58,704	58,794
Fraud	18,307	11,074	9,332	8,409	8,316	8,283	8,983	8,892	8,898	8,088
Other dishonesty	7,094	6,273	6,375	5,335	5,416	5,308	5,260	5,207	5,204	5,094
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	128,566	127,889	129,734	118,025	109,430	93,443	82,020	75,201	59,479	54,418
Fire-raising	4,698	4,856	4,976	4,635	4,651	4,244	3,966	3,755	3,066	2,549
Vandalism etc.	123,868	123,033	124,758	113,390	104,779	89,199	78,054	71,446	56,413	51,869
Other crimes	77,139	81,814	84,938	81,340	81,248	73,670	67,223	67,756	62,452	63,266
Crimes against public justice	25,616	27,668	32,052	31,353	29,493	26,885	26,294	26,635	23,401	23,610
Handling an offensive weapon	9,545	9,628	10,110	8,989	8,980	7,042	6,283	5,631	4,015	3,795
Drugs	41,823	44,247	42,422	40,746	42,509	39,408	34,347	35,157	34,688	35,616
Other	155	271	354	252	266	335	299	333	348	245

Table 13: Number of crimes cleared-up broken down by crime category, 2004/5 to 2013/14

Crime / Offence group	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
All crimes	195,225	190,918	198,985	184,631	184,719	166,680	156,943	155,264	140,083	139,306
Non-sexual crimes of violence	8,690	8,107	8,467	7,921	8,060	7,522	8,189	7,195	5,920	5,554
Homicide etc. (incl. causing death by driving)	164	120	159	141	134	112	121	117	95	108
Attempted murder & serious assault ³	4,538	4,232	4,405	4,074	3,988	3,694	3,841	3,469	2,834	2,663
Robbery	1,445	1,312	1,413	1,235	1,368	1,157	1,400	1,382	1,208	1,077
Other violence	2,543	2,443	2,490	2,471	2,570	2,559	2,827	2,227	1,783	1,706
Sexual crimes⁴	5,509	4,911	4,944	4,682	4,311	4,282	4,447	4,966	5,228	6,502
Rape & attempted rape	763	834	753	736	591	566	621	725	904	1,320
Sexual assault	2,526	2,525	2,461	2,381	2,138	2,097	2,054	1,811	1,858	2,404
Crimes associated with prostitution	1,442	723	764	670	760	638	559	544	512	474
Other sexual crimes	778	829	966	895	822	981	1,213	1,886	1,954	2,304
Crimes of dishonesty	78,447	68,775	69,113	62,928	65,251	58,678	57,716	57,347	51,752	51,322
Housebreaking ⁵	8,732	8,181	8,043	6,533	6,165	5,931	6,141	5,929	5,345	5,178
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	2,372	3,064	2,776	2,062	2,623	1,559	916	767	631	540
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	3,603	2,519	2,695	2,310	2,264	1,755	1,633	1,542	1,236	1,002
Theft of a motor vehicle	5,775	5,167	6,180	5,287	5,016	4,083	3,770	3,193	2,730	2,577
Shoplifting	21,871	21,629	22,399	22,609	24,945	23,868	23,271	23,433	21,090	21,817
Other theft	15,762	14,847	15,024	13,509	13,782	12,835	12,937	13,720	12,326	12,071
Fraud	14,706	8,428	7,004	6,247	6,200	4,749	5,139	4,913	4,641	4,516
Other dishonesty	5,626	4,940	4,992	4,371	4,256	3,898	3,909	3,850	3,753	3,621
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	27,276	29,084	32,467	29,037	27,374	23,940	20,503	19,106	16,047	13,657
Fire-raising	1,035	1,278	1,311	1,175	1,133	1,001	870	896	794	694
Vandalism etc.	26,241	27,806	31,156	27,862	26,241	22,939	19,633	18,210	15,253	12,963
Other crimes	75,303	80,041	83,994	80,063	79,723	72,258	66,088	66,650	61,136	62,271
Crimes against public justice	25,192	27,021	31,377	30,711	28,760	26,163	25,651	25,996	22,846	23,127
Handling an offensive weapon	9,247	9,319	9,822	8,624	8,598	6,793	6,043	5,479	3,894	3,712
Drugs	40,751	43,470	42,495	40,503	42,127	39,001	34,129	34,877	34,069	35,200
Other	113	231	300	225	238	301	265	298	327	232

It is surprising that fewer crimes are being solved while there are more police officers. This also means that the number of crimes being solved per police officer is falling. As the Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin series indicates, the number of crimes being cleared up per full time equivalent police officer has fallen from 12 in 2006/7 to 8 in 2013/14²⁹.

²⁹ Scottish Government, Recorded Crime in Scotland 2010/11 and 2013/14 – Table A1

However, this does not mean that our police officers are not doing a good job. Rather, it is likely to be a consequence of how they are being deployed. If officers have to spend more time dealing with paperwork and background duties, they inevitably have less time to spend on solving crime.

Table 14: Difference in recorded crime, clear-up rate and number of crimes cleared up, 2006/7 and 2013/14

Crime / Offence group	2006/7 recorded crime	2013/14 recorded crime	difference	2006/7 clear- up rate (%)	2013/14 clear up rate (%)	difference ³⁰	2006/7 number of recorded crimes cleared up	2013/14 number of recorded crimes cleared up	difference
Total crimes	419,257	270,397	-148,860	47	52	4	198,985	139,306	-59,679
Non-sexual crimes of violence	14,099	6,785	-7,314	60	82	22	8,467	5,554	-2,913
Homicide etc. ² (incl. causing death by driving)	159	106	-53	100	102	2	159	108	-51
Attempted murder & serious assault ³	7,345	3,268	-4,077	60	81	22	4,405	2,663	-1,742
Robbery	3,578	1,499	-2,079	39	72	32	1,413	1,077	-336
Other violence	3,017	1,912	-1,105	83	89	7	2,490	1,706	-784
Sexual crimes⁴	6,726	8,604	1,878	74	76	2	4,944	6,502	1,558
Rape & attempted rape	1,123	1,808	685	67	73	6	753	1,320	567
Sexual assault	3,452	3,405	-47	71	71	-1	2,461	2,404	-57
Crimes associated with prostitution	779	490	-289	98	97	-1	764	474	-290
Other sexual crimes	1,372	2,901	1,529	70	79	9	966	2,304	1,338
Crimes of dishonesty	183,760	137,324	-46,436	38	37	0	69,113	51,322	-17,791
Housebreaking ⁵	30,580	22,272	-8,308	26	23	-3	8,043	5,178	-2,865
Theft by opening a lockfast place (OLP)	7,422	3,218	-4,204	37	17	-21	2,776	540	-2,236
Theft from a motor vehicle by OLP	16,060	6,189	-9,871	17	16	-1	2,695	1,002	-1,693
Theft of a motor vehicle	15,000	5,976	-9,024	41	43	2	6,180	2,577	-3,603
Shoplifting	28,750	27,693	-1,057	78	79	1	22,399	21,817	-582
Other theft	70,241	58,794	-11,447	21	21	-1	15,024	12,071	-2,953
Fraud	9,332	8,088	-1,244	75	56	-19	7,004	4,516	-2,488
Other dishonesty	6,375	5,094	-1,281	78	71	-7	4,992	3,621	-1,371
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.	129,734	54,418	-75,316	25	25	0	32,467	13,657	-18,810
Fire-raising	4,976	2,549	-2,427	26	27	1	1,311	694	-617
Vandalism etc.	124,758	51,869	-72,889	25	25	0	31,156	12,963	-18,193
Other crimes	84,938	63,266	-21,672	99	98	0	83,994	62,271	-21,723
Crimes against public justice	32,052	23,610	-8,442	98	98	0	31,377	23,127	-8,250
Handling an offensive weapon	10,110	3,795	-6,315	97	98	1	9,822	3,712	-6,110
Drugs	42,422	35,616	-6,806	100	99	-1	42,495	35,200	-7,295
Other	354	245	-109	85	95	10	300	232	-68

³⁰ Please note that the clear-up rates are rounded to whole numbers. The figure in the difference column is worked out from the un-rounded clear-up rate, which is why some of the calculations may seem wrong at first glance.

2.3 Police staff

There have always been a number of people employed by the police carrying out civilian roles, though previous administrations sought to expand this process of civilianisation in an attempt to both save money and free up police officers' time as the following quotes illustrate:

On 25 November 1999, then justice minister Jim Wallace told the Scottish Parliament *"Because a move towards civilianisation has taken place, more police officers have been freed up for the front-line operational duties that the public expect them to carry out."*

Similarly, ACPOS's Annual report on Best Value in 2008/09 commented: *"Forces have been continuing to review and improve internal staffing structures, saving £5.8 million and increasing the civilianisation of posts where police powers are not required, saving £5.6 million."*

However, in recent years, it could be argued that there has been a move away from civilianisation in order to be able to afford the commitment to maintain the 1,000 additional officers as well as the pressure to meet the expected savings from the police forces merger.

At Holyrood's Justice Committee on 20 November 2013, there was a discussion between Chief Constable Sir Stephen House and Stevie Diamond from the police staff Scotland branch of Unison, over whether police officers were being used to backfill work previously carried out by police staff.

Stevie Diamond: With regard to the 17,234 officers, we have grave concerns about the way in which some officers are being deployed at the moment, such as to backfill police staff posts. Since 1 April, we have lost about 450 police staff posts through voluntary redundancy and early retirement, and a significant number are being backfilled by police officers. Some proposals that the organisation has made to allow us to meet the budgetary constraints for this year will mean that police officers will not be doing patrol work but will be doing the work of police staff who are no longer going to be used by the organisation. The 17,234 is almost a notional figure. The chief constable is having to make operational decisions to backfill for police staff.

The Convener: Chief constable, are you using police officers to backfill those posts?

Chief Constable House: I have said before to this committee that we have no policy and no strategy of backfilling civilian posts with police officers when civilian staff go. That remains the case at this moment in time. I am certainly not suggesting that Stevie Diamond's analysis is incorrect—there are, of course, occasions when backfilling will take place. However, that has always been the case. If a member of staff has to go on a training day and their job is essential, it will be backfilled by a police officer.

The Convener: I think that the question is whether that is on the increase, rather than whether it always happened.

Chief Constable House: Under the terms on which staff go, jobs are in most instances closed down, so in the vast majority of cases there is no backfilling to be done. I do not agree with Stevie Diamond on that. I understand where he is coming from, but we do not see that the 450 posts or thereabouts—the number will be higher by the end of the financial year—are being backfilled by police officers.

The debate between the two sides over the impact on police staff has continued. In November 2014 George McIrvine, secretary of UNISON police staff Scotland branch, commented:

*"... police staff are facing big job losses and are the victims of the Scottish Government's policy to maintain police officers while cutting £1.1bn from the police budget ...We have built a modern balanced Scottish police force of hard working, high skilled civilians who are value for money and work side by side with our police officers to fight crime. Finger print officers, crime scene investigators, anti-fraud officers, intelligence analysis, forensics, legal clerical, custody officers, community safety officers, call centre staff and many more. These people have local knowledge and high technical skills and have reduced crime to its lowest level ever. The police service will not survive this outdated political pledge, it is death by 1,000 officers."*³¹

³¹ Unison press release <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/news/2014/novdec/1126a.htm>

3. Policy recommendations

Localised policing: Reform Scotland fundamentally disagrees with the idea of a single police force across Scotland as we don't believe that a single force allows for the necessary flexibility to deal with the differences that exist throughout Scotland. Although we have one set of laws that apply to all, there are different priorities and needs that need to be taken into account; we don't believe that there is the same ability to do that with only one force. We argued at the time that we did not think it was necessary to merge the police forces and certainly would disagree that Scotland had too many forces prior to the merger. Many European countries have multi-layered policing systems, with a centralised police force for serious crime as well as local police forces.

Our preference would have been for a stronger role for the Scottish Crime & Drug Enforcement Agency so that there was a greater opportunity for shared services and joint working, as well as strengthening the ability to deal with cross-border threats. At the same time, we would have also liked a stronger, more locally accountable system, which we believe could have been achieved by matching police forces up to local authority areas – a system which could have been easily piloted in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. This policy would have helped deliver greater local accountability, and by maintaining the funding split between councils and central government, this would have allowed councils to choose to spend more, or less, on policing as their area required. Such a policy would also easily allow for different policing procedures, for example the use of firearms or dealing with prostitution, to be adopted. The local chief constable would have operational responsibility, though would be answerable to the local council.

However, we accept that wholesale police re-organisation on this scale is unlikely and that, with Police Scotland still relatively new, it would be better to find a way to re-inject localism into the existing structure. We believe that there are two ways, in particular, that this can be done – through the funding and governance structures.

Funding: As the old adage goes, “He who pays the piper calls the tune”, and if local authorities are to have any meaningful input into policing in Scotland they must contribute toward the cost of policing. If local authorities have no control over the purse strings then it will be difficult for councils to adopt differing policies towards policing, or even have a meaningful input into policy direction. As a result, there needs to be a change back to the old system where there is

roughly a 50/50 split in funding policing between local authorities and the Scottish Government. However, for this to be effective within a single police structure there would need to be some divisional structural changes to reflect council boundaries so that divisions matched up to local authority areas. This would then mean that there was a division commander in charge of policing in each council area in Scotland. Each council would need to have a policing committee or individual responsible for policing who would liaise and work with the Division. This would allow for greater accountability to local communities as well as an increased actual input into local policing.

Governance: The Scottish Police Authority is basically a quango with members appointed by government and this blurs transparency and accountability. Rather than the government nominating all members, the membership should be made up of a split between local government and central government appointees to reflect the split in funding. To ensure that the need for diversity and flexibility could be accommodated by a single police force it would be necessary to have a representative from each local authority. This would of course lead to a very large police authority – depending on the number of local authorities. However, this representation is necessary to ensure the different needs are appreciated and represented on the board as well as delivering a clear line of accountability back to voters.

Review 1,000 additional police officers policy: While the fall in recorded crime in Scotland is to be welcomed, it is worrying that, over a period of falling crime and an increase in police officers, fewer crimes were actually being cleared-up. Unison, representing police staff, has suggested that this policy, combined with pressures to find savings, have led to Police Scotland getting rid of civilian staff and, as a result, police officers have had to fill those roles. If police officers have to spend more time in back offices, as opposed to being on patrol, it could help to explain this fall. We would urge the Scottish Government to review this commitment to see if it is actually delivering value for taxpayers' money. Given the drop in crimes cleared-up since the introduction of this policy, it is quite possible that changing it, or dropping it altogether, could actually lead to an increase in the number of police out on the beat. After all, it is not just the number of police officers that is important, but how they are deployed.

It is important to highlight that removing the pledge does not necessarily mean a reduction in police officers. If the pledge was removed, this would give greater operational freedom to the Chief Constable to use resources in the way he feels is

most effective – this may be to maintain existing police numbers, but it may be to deploy some of his budget elsewhere. However, this would be an operational decision rather than a political one, and one for which the Chief Constable would be accountable.

...But beware the local authorities' issue: While some of the suggestions outlined in these policy recommendations can resurrect an element of localism within Police Scotland, there is one note of caution.

When Reform Scotland argued against the creation of a single police force and that police forces should match up with local authority boundaries, there was no objection to this principle. Instead, it all focused on the fact that this would leave Scotland with 32 police authorities and that this was too many. There was a problem with accountability within the eight force structure, but there is a danger that the move to a single force was done because it was easier than having to examine local government.

Former Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill suggested in 2012 that it was “inevitable” there would be changes to the structure of local government in Scotland.³²

Whatever those changes, regardless if they bring about greater localism or less, it is vital that changes to local government are made prior to any changes to Police Scotland – the horse must be put before the cart.

³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-20484775>, 25/11/12

4. Conclusion

Scotland is a diverse country and it is unlikely that in any public service area one uniform policy will work across the country. What works and is needed in Glasgow is unlikely to be the same on Skye. That does not mean to say that you can't have one main set of laws applied throughout the country, simply that the problems and priorities will differ depending on where you are.

Reform Scotland argued against the centralisation of the police. While we agreed with the need for a more efficient and centralised police force to deal with higher level crimes, we believed that it was essential that this operated alongside local police forces which responded to, and were accountable to, people in the areas in which they operated. As we highlighted in our 2011 report, 'Striking the Balance', a number of other European countries, such as France, Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium, operate multi-layered policing systems which allow for a strong central police force as well as local police forces.

It is still too early to comment on whether Police Scotland has met its goals in terms of efficiency savings and value for money. However, as the examples in this report indicate, there is a danger that the merger is becoming a takeover as Strathclyde's policing practices are rolled out across the country, as opposed to maintaining local diversity in policing.

There are also concerns about the impact of the 1,000 additional officers pledge. While the fall in crime is to be welcomed, it is worrying that over the same period of falling crime and rising officer levels, the actual number of crimes being cleared-up has fallen. Whether this is as a result of officers having to spend more time covering work previously carried out by civilian staff is unclear. However, this certainly raises questions over efficiencies and value for money and suggests that the pledge has not led to 1,000 additional officers patrolling Scottish streets, which was what the public understood the policy would mean.

The centralisation of the police also acts as a warning about the loss of local input and diversity that other attempts at centralising services in Scotland could bring about.

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