



SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION

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Humza Yousaf MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
Scottish Government
Room 1W.11
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

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By email: CabSecJustice@gov.scot

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Prime Minister and Policing Pledges

As you will be aware the new Prime Minister has already made significant commitments in respect of policing; police funding and police numbers with the biggest headline being that he is to commence recruitment of 20,000 police officers forthwith.

Given your frequent public commentary, I know you agree with me that this is long overdue given the crisis an ideologically driven cuts agenda created for policing in England & Wales. I know it also won't be lost on you that an increase of 20,000 officers simply restores police numbers to where they were before the cuts commenced in England and Wales in 2010.

The SPF appreciates that the Scottish Government chose a diametrically different path, not least with the recruitment of 1,000 officers from 2007 and the creation of the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) in 2013 as a direct alternative to the slash and burn south of the border. The SPF recognises this approach was necessary given the consequential impact of austerity on spending in Scotland.

That being said, it is impossible to conclude anything other than the fact the funding settlements for the police, particularly since the last election, has set the PSoS on a path similar to that you; the wider Scottish Government, and First Minister had been such vocal critics of in the recent past. It would be ironic in the extreme if the Prime Minister is seen to restore police numbers to 2010 levels

whilst the Scottish Government presides over a rapid reduction to 2008 levels over the same period.

It is notable that the once triumphant language (on policing) that was a cornerstone of the Scottish Government's messaging for its first eight years in power is now nowhere to be seen.

I appreciate you will cite that the police revenue budget has been protected in real terms and that the capital budget has increased by 52%. This is however only a partial truth given the revenue budget was reduced by £100 Million prior to that protection being put in place.

The funding settlements prior to that reduction were in themselves deficient as they were predicated on a business case that is now universally accepted as not fully appreciating the scale of challenge integrating the new police service would create. It also contained no provision at all for the exceptional additional demand caused by the raid upturn in the terrorist threat across the world – not least as this only came to be known after the business case was concluded.

We both know the capital allocation is woefully insufficient and will only see the police fleet; estate, and general infrastructure decay even further. A colleague of mine recently described the position on capital as “a 52% increase on hee-haw is just hee-haw and a half.”

The SPF is more than prepared to continue to shine a very public light on where lack of investment is damaging the service to the public and the quality of policing being delivered in Scotland.

Self-evidently the Prime Minister's pledges present the potential for considerable Barnett Consequentials and over £100 Million seems to be widely accepted as at the bottom end of what they might be.

I appreciate that discretion on how any dividend ought to be utilised in Scotland is one entirely for the Scottish Government. However, I am sure it will not surprise you that the SPF considers such consequentials ought to make their way in totality into Scotland's policing (and not wider justice) “pot.”

Without putting too fine a point on it, we all know that the cuts to policing in England & Wales were ill advised and have probably set police and community relations back for at least a decade. The Scottish Government has now taken steps down that very same road. The Scottish Government basked in the glory of not following the failed England & Wales policing approaches and is kidding itself if it considers it won't face the same backlash for now pursuing the self-same thing.

Your Government has now been presented with a get out of jail free card. If it chooses not to use it, it will be impossible to conclude anything other than the Government is deliberately pursuing an act of policing vandalism to the detriment of the citizens of Scotland.

It cannot be lost on you that criticism from within the police service towards the Scottish Government is increasing and becoming more vocal and pointed. In the digital age these criticisms are landing in every corner of the country and your government is increasingly seen as having given up on policing. As a general observation no government anywhere performs well in the court of public opinion if it is considered to have abandoned its first responsibility of keeping its citizens safe.

I suspect you are aware of this and you and the wider government are now furiously wrapping yourselves in crime stat triumphalism as the sole measure for policing success. This of course is the same failed messaging a former Home Secretary and Prime Minister used as a fig leaf for the disaster she not only created but presided over.

The public saw through all of it then and we will ensure they do so again.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in early course to discuss this matter

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Calum Steele', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

CALUM STEELE
General Secretary