

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

17th February 2010
Agenda Item No 14

Cumbria Police Authority Award for Bravery

SUMMARY

At the Police Authority meeting of 14th February 2003 it was agreed that the Authority would make an annual award for bravery in conjunction with the Police Bravery Awards organised nationally by the Police Federation. The nominees would then progress to the National Bravery Award “recognised” formally by the Members of Cumbria Police Authority, the Constabulary and Police Federation.

The National Award ceremony is sponsored by the Sun Newspaper and held every year in July at the Dorchester Hotel in London, receiving extensive media coverage, both nationally and locally.

The criterion for the award is as follows:

“In the opinion of the national selection committee the most outstanding act of courage or bravery by a member of the police service in England and Wales in placing themselves at risk of death or serious injury for which a medal, commendation or other recognition was made during the calendar year under consideration.”

The incident leading to the nomination could have occurred at any time, but the act has to be “recognised” in the year before the award takes place.

This year members are asked to consider the attached nomination in respect of Constable Bill Barker and the posthumous recognition for his actions on the Northside Bridge in Workington, when it collapsed in the floods on 20th November 2009.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Members concur with the proposed nomination attached.
2. That the Cumbria Police Authority award for Bravery, an Elterwater slate shield, be presented to the nominee at the next Constabulary Award Ceremony by the Chair of the Police Authority or his nominee.
3. That the nominee receives a lifelong certificate from the Police Authority to accompany this shield.

DETAIL

On Tuesday the 17th November 2009 all agencies were notified of heavy rain and possible flooding in the whole of Cumbria. This severe rainfall was declared as an 'unusual incident' on Thursday 19th November 2009: by 5pm that day 210-220 mm of rain had fallen over the Western Fells in Cumbria with more rain forecast. Severe Flooding in this area was driven by a combination of the heavy rain, saturated ground and swollen rivers.

An estimated 1,100 homes were affected by flooding. In the early hours of Friday the 20th November 2009 314mm of rain had fallen in a period of 24 hours and water levels continued to rise. This devastated large part of the area: closing roads, forcing hundreds of people from their homes and sweeping away bridges.

PC Barker was on duty on Friday the 20th November 2009, when together with other officers, he responded to a report of a large hole on the approach to Northside bridge in Workington. Unconfirmed reports were that a motorist had got stuck on the bridge.

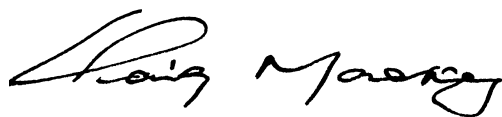
Members of the public were still trying to cross this bridge on foot and in vehicles as large as single deck buses; it was obvious they were putting themselves in danger. PC Barker had gone onto the bridge on foot and was directing motorists to safety off the bridge when, due to the force and volume of the water, Northside bridge collapsed . PC Barker was swept away with the bridge masonry and the flood water. Due to his actions no one else was on the bridge at the time of its collapse.

PC Barkers body was recovered on a beach north of the mouth of the river Derwent near to Allonby several hours after the bridge collapsed.

Leading the tributes to PC Barker Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister, described him as a "very heroic, very brave man" adding: "I think we owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude for the service he has shown"

Sir Hugh Orde, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said: "Being part of the Police Service means walking towards danger and, in the best traditions of the service, that is what Bill Barker bravely did"

Cumbria Constabulary Chief Constable Craig Mackey, said: "He was directing motorists safely off Northside Bridge, saving lives, when the tragic incident occurred."



Craig Mackey
Chief Constable