



CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

Wednesday, 25th January 2006

LOBBYING FOR LOCAL POLICING

Police Authority chiefs will meet with over 150 MPs today (Wednesday, 25 January), as part of the Association of Police Authorities' (APA) campaign to highlight public opposition to the Government's inflexible approach to restructuring policing across England and Wales.

The meetings with MPs – which will take place in Parliament as part of the APA's national Lobby Day - will enable police authorities to explain at first hand how the Government's 'one size fits all' approach to police restructuring could force mergers across the country regardless of local communities' needs.

On the same day, the APA will call on the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke to consider a range of options for restructuring, so that police authorities can adopt solutions that are appropriate to local circumstances and needs. The APA will present the Home Secretary with more details about one of the possible alternatives to mergers, known as a "federated approach". This is preferred by many police authorities who believe that it will enable them to best serve local communities and improve the way that forces work together to tackle problems such as terrorism and serious crime. Additionally, the APA will call on Government to meet costs of changes and will present ideas about how council tax may be equalised without local tax payers facing huge increases to pay for mergers.

APA Chairman Bob Jones said: "Whilst some police authorities have identified merging as a potential way forward, for other parts of the country merging is likely to be a huge drain on resources that will make policing more remote and less accountable to local communities. We are seeking a commitment from Charles Clarke to work with us, and the communities we represent, so that together we can strengthen policing structures for the better. No-one should attempt to change the structure that has existed for 30 years in just 3 months. Give us the time to examine all alternatives before rushing into action which could damage the links between the police and the communities they serve."

The national Lobby Day highlights continuing opposition to Government plans to restructure police.

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News Release

In December 2005, police authorities (including Cumbria's) refused to endorse or submit final business cases to the Home Office, or to consider requesting voluntary mergers under the Police Act, unless they received reassurances from Government on key issues such as funding and local accountability arrangements.

Cumbria Police Authority Chairman Councillor Reg Watson will be meeting with local Cumbrian MP's at Westminster as part of today's event.

Editors' note:

Cumbria Police Authority is made up of local people - a mixture of councillors, magistrates and independent members - and acts as the bridge between Cumbria Constabulary and all communities across the county in policing matters. Legally, it owns the buildings and land in the police property portfolio and is responsible for:

- *setting the budget for Cumbria Constabulary, including raising local council taxes for policing;*
- *consulting and engaging with local communities in Cumbria to find out what they want the local police to tackle;*
- *setting the strategic direction for policing in Cumbria; deciding local priorities for policing and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher*
- *appointing (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Chief Constable; Deputy Chief Constable, and Assistant Chief Constables;*
- *monitoring and managing local police performance.*

Further information: Clive Alcock, Clerk & Chief Executive; or Stuart Edwards, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, at the Cumbria Police Authority office, Carleton Hall, Penrith CA10 2AU. Tel. (01768)

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