

Commissioner's response to Rural Connect

Rural Connect contains some strong messages from both the public and the police. It is an important piece of research to inform our understanding of the challenges of policing rural communities.

Members of the public from Dyfed Powys, Cardiff's Universities Police Science Institute, Aberystwyth University and the police have provided important contributions to our understanding of rural crime and justice concerns.

The voices in this research deserve to be heard. They highlight key areas that we need to address. Some of these areas require small tweaks; others need more fundamental work. I will explore them all in more detail with the Chief Constable.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams are vital. The public want the police to know, and to be known, in the community they serve.

I intend to:

- Review provision of the 'Bobby Van' service. Its withdrawal was a mistake.
- Expand on and promote mediation services. Mediation offers real potential for better, quicker, less stressful, cheaper outcomes for disputes.
- Explore a "**Say Hello!**" campaign to encourage officers and the public to speak more on a daily basis.
- Provide better mobility for neighbourhood police officers. We will consider scooters, motorbikes, cycles and mopeds as well as conventional vehicles.

Police must understand the local community; officers should live in the area they are policing.

Some actions to improve this are already in motion. I will pursue the following with the Chief Constable:

- Request suggestions on how promotion can better support and reflect the neighbourhood policing role from the Chief Constable.
- Request the Chief Constable to review middle management and to identify opportunity for promotion within neighbourhood policing teams.
- Ensure specialisms – for example, village specials, farm specials, cyber specials, rural specials – are reflected in Special Constable recruitment.
- Ensure school engagement work becomes the responsibility of local neighbourhood teams. We are currently reviewing this programme.

Small stuff matters. The public want local officers to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour. Senior officers need to empower local officers to exercise local decision-making. Local justice is important.

The report identifies a number of issues. I propose take on the following in discussions with the Chief Constable:

- Cultural change needs to be reinforced. We have already scrapped targets for police officers, allowing local officers to focus on responding to local issues rather than striving to meet arbitrary and unrealistic targets.

- The Commissioner's Fund should continue. The fund promotes front line decision-making and encourages local officers to and communities to prevent crime. It has distributed £248,600 to 70 projects.
- Mobile IT is already putting more power in the hands of officers. This programme completes by June. We are considering further IT investments
- Mobile police stations must be deployed carefully. The public and police are sceptical of them. Vans must be equipped and used to meet local need.

Relations between the police and the public still need further work to increase confidence and trust.

The police are currently looking at ways to enhance volunteer led community watch schemes and are looking to establish processes that support face to face engagement and the use of community messaging systems.

Local teams are using an increasing variety of methods to share information with the public.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams are now on Twitter, many hold local drop-in events, stations are open when police officers are in.

Estate redevelopment work, taking into account these findings, will begin in summer 2015.

- I will discuss scrapping ineffective Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings with the Chief Constable. I would like to see local initiatives to improve work with partner organisations and ensure that people feel safe where they live.
- The 101 system must be improved. I expect to see a simplified system introduced in 2015.

I am pleased that this research, along with the Literature Review on Rural Crime and Policing carried out by UPSI, has been instrumental in the development of Dyfed Powys Police's Rural Policing Strategy Action Plan.

I intend to build on this work with the Force, UPSI and partners to explore how we can further improve safety for homes and families across mid-Wales.