

# View from the chair

The horrific actions of Raoul Moat have led a sick section of society to hail him a hero, but Police Federation chairman Paul McKeever looks to the Police Bravery Awards to find true acts of heroism



Photography: Anderson Photography

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation

What kind of society are we living in when a cold-blooded killer is being hailed a hero?

Raoul Moat attempted to murder the mother of his child, murdered an unarmed man and maimed a police officer. The sheer devastation caused by his actions are beyond comprehension. So many are suffering as a result of all this, and yet these actions are being cruelly hailed as heroic by a pitiful few who obscurely think his actions are worthy of praise.

Last month I was fortunate to be in the company of true heroes when I attended our annual Police Bravery Awards. These awards give due recognition to the exceptional acts of heroism police officers throughout England and Wales display on a daily basis. A staggering 58 officers were nominated. Every one of them went above and beyond the call of duty and their courage cannot be underestimated or over-praised.

But recognition of what police officers do each day should not be sporadically given. It shouldn't take an annual event, as important as it is, to make people stop and acknowledge the truly selfless sacrifices made by our officers on the frontline.

Too many take for granted that there will always be a police officer on hand who will tackle the dangerous and criminal elements that most run from. Yet too frequently when officers execute the weighty responsibility this bravery affords they are criticised in the post-incident aftermath, often receiving accusation and blame instead of the gratitude and support they deserve.

All too often we find ourselves under scrutiny and sadly this detracts from the positive work that we do every day, instead serving to glorify the actions of the dregs of society that offer praise to killers such as Raoul Moat.

Let us not forget that those who are quick to criticise and point the finger of blame rely on the police and other emergency service providers just as much as the next person. Regardless of the circumstances, my colleagues on the frontline will always run to the aid of those in need.

We police by consent and are proud to do so. We do this against enormous pressure from a variety of sources, not least against the increasing levels of threat within the communities we serve. The serious firearms incidents in recent months illustrate the very real danger police officers face.

I cannot imagine this country without the established police service that we have – one that I am proud to serve in. And one that consists of many heroes truly deserving of praise and accolade. Those that are quick to criticise need to imagine what state the country would be in without our officers on the streets risking their lives to protect them – officers like PC David Rathband, who is a credit to the service and to the country.

Our thoughts are with Raoul Moat's victims, their families and our colleague PC Rathband, for whom we have been inundated with calls of support. PC Rathband lost the sight of both eyes after being shot by Moat. Yet this brave officer openly said he bears no malice towards his attacker. That's a true hero.